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Mardi
29 septembre 2020

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 September 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 septembre 2020

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning. Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SOLDIERS' AID COMMISSION ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA COMMISSION
D'AIDE AUX ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 22, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 202, An Act to continue the Soldiers' Aid Commission / Projet de loi 202, Loi prorogeant la Commission d'aide aux anciens combattants.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Thank you, Speaker. It's really a great honour to rise today to speak to the Soldiers' Aid Commission Act, 2020, which has been introduced by the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. The Soldiers' Aid Commission does a lot of work to support our veterans in Ontario behind the scenes, and I think many members in this place may not even have been aware before we debated it here what some of that ongoing work is.

I think a lot of people are aware, over the discussion over the last few weeks since the bill has been introduced, that the Soldiers' Aid Commission has actually been around, serving veterans in Ontario, for more than 100 years, Speaker, and it has a long history. In fact, this morning, a quick Google search pulled up a report that was published in 2015 that highlights that 100-year history. That long history includes serving veterans who have returned from both our world wars, as well as the Korean War. Those events are a long time ago now. In fact—I'm just checking the years here, as I look at the timeline—those events happened before I was born, so I think it makes sense that we're standing here discussing a bill that would modernize the mandate of the Soldiers' Aid Commission.

Veterans and their families face many challenges when they return home. Those challenges can include post-traumatic stress disorder, physical injury, unemployment and homelessness. Actually, Speaker, if you pull up Netflix these days, you can find lots of great documentaries that have been done on some of the damage that's caused by serving our country overseas and ensuring our

freedoms remain here in Canada—and freedoms abroad, which our veterans have often served the purpose of upholding. We're proud, as Canadians, to not only fight for freedom here in Canada and here in Ontario, but to have a strong military that is able to also uphold freedoms internationally. So not only is that important during war-time, but it's important that we continue to understand what the repercussions of that are after those world events, and, in Ontario, part of that work is done by the Soldiers' Aid Commission.

We recognize now that there's a new generation of servicemen and women, and a modern Soldiers' Aid Commission would help more of our heroes in need. Some of the things, for those who aren't aware, that the Soldiers' Aid Commission covers and pays for, for veterans who have returned, are health-related items and specialized equipment, such as hearing aids, wheelchairs and prosthetics, as well as home-related items such as mobility-related renovations and repair costs; also things such as counseling, and, this may sound like a simple thing, even clothing when they've returned to Canada.

In addition, the modernized program will help veterans in need pay for employment readiness supports such as short-term courses or training, work tools and clothing for even a job interview. We all know—I think we can remember going out and perhaps buying a suit or something nice to wear for our first job interview, and we took advice from those who were already in the working world on how we should dress and what we should look like. Well, you can imagine, particularly for those who have served overseas for a lengthy period of time, they might not even have that clothing and probably haven't done a job interview in many years, so anything we can do to support them in that transition back to home life I think is important work.

I'm also proud that Ontario has this long history. Actually, we're the only province that supports veterans in this way, and that's a history we should be proud of and we should build on, and that's why we're here discussing it today.

Now, just before I go into some of the details about how we're modernizing the commission, I want to take this opportunity to speak about a constituent of mine who actually has been very involved in getting us to this place. Some of you may know, if you've had interactions with the Soldiers' Aid Commission, John Greenfield. John is a very special community leader in Durham, and it really is a privilege to be able to stand in this House today and acknowledge him.

John has worked—he has been a community guy. He has worked for the city of Oshawa for 40 years—of course,

now retired. He has been a member of the Royal Canadian Legion for 32 years. He was a service officer and a sergeant-at-arms for 15 years and he is also a life member of the local Temple Lodge No. 649, where he has been a member for 56 years. Actually, it's probably a bit longer than that now, because the stat I was looking at is probably a few years old now, so it's probably longer than 56 years. He's a regular volunteer, as so many of our veterans are. He serves regularly at the Legion, but also the Bowmanville Older Adult Association. He can be found frequently there serving meals to seniors. He really is a community-minded constituent who it's really such an honour to serve.

He's really always—I can't think of a community event I've been at, really, and John not have been there. He's very involved in planning our local Remembrance Day ceremonies, he's at every one of those that I am at, and he's always faithful to march in all of our Christmas parades.

But why am I highlighting John today, Speaker? He's a constituent, and I think his background speaks for itself, but, more than that, John has actually been on the Soldiers' Aid Commission for 18 years. And since that time 18 years ago, he has been lobbying subsequent ministers and governments to expand the mandate of the Soldiers' Aid Commission. He saw the need to modernize. But John is not only a man of words; he is a man of action. And so John took action indeed. He started touring Legion halls across the province to spread the news about the Soldiers' Aid Commission, to make sure that veterans were aware of the supports that were available to them. But also, what he found in those discussions with them was that most people couldn't believe that the mandate did not serve modern-day veterans.

0910

Speaker, that's leadership. John recognized, despite the fact that perhaps people of his vintage were well served by the commission, that there was a generation coming after him and we needed to modernize to better serve them. That's leadership. I can't think of what leadership is, more than looking ahead to what the next generation is going to need, not only making sure we're serving the people of today and the needs of today.

And so that's why we're here. He saw that those who had gone and served in Afghanistan, for example, were not served by the Soldiers' Aid Commission, and I think we all—I shouldn't say all, but probably most members in this place, if you don't know someone who has served in Afghanistan directly, you probably have met a family member of someone who has served. And that's an example of an event that is in my lifetime that I can remember. It's quite shocking, actually, that our Soldiers' Aid Commission has taken this long to recognize the need to make sure these veterans are taken care of when they return after going abroad and defending our freedoms.

This bill before us that we're debating here today, Bill 202, is An Act to continue the Soldiers' Aid Commission and, as I said, Speaker, modernize it, to make sure it's serving all veterans. I'm going to read from the preamble,

because it really sets out what the goal is with this bill: "All Ontarians recognize the great contributions and sacrifices that veterans have made to Ontario and to Canada. Since the establishment of the Soldiers' Aid Commission in 1915, Ontario has honoured the service of veterans to the nation, and supported veterans and their families in need. Ontario remains committed to carrying on the legacy of the commission in order to help meet the modern and changing needs of veterans and their families."

There's a word I want to highlight in the preamble that I think we all need to remember and recognize, and I think we do. I think most of us do. I think it's why we attend Remembrance Day ceremonies every year. But it's that word "honour." This is about financial assistance, it's about meeting the practical needs of veterans, but it's also about honouring them. They honoured every single one of our lives by serving our country and upholding our freedoms, and we are in a better place today because of them. I can't think of a more important thing for us to do as a government than to make sure that, in response, we continue to honour them. That's why the words are echoed every Remembrance Day, "Lest we forget." We must not forget their service, and we must continue to honour them, and that's why we're here.

Now, I want to get into some of the practical things that this bill is doing. Section 3 of the bill sets out the objects of the modernized commission. It says:

"The commission has the following objects:

"1. To administer a financial assistance program for eligible veterans and eligible family members of veterans who are resident in Ontario.

"2. To review applications for financial assistance and decide whether or not to approve them, in whole or part, in accordance with the regulations made under this act, if any.

"3. To provide advice to the minister on matters affecting veterans and their families.

"4. To engage in any other activities that may be prescribed by the regulations made under this act."

There are two items within that section that I want to highlight and talk further about. One is that it is right in the objects of the commission to provide advice to the minister on matters affecting veterans and their families. I think that ongoing advice from the commission is necessary to make sure that the commission is modern and is keeping up with the events of the day.

Partnered with that, I think, in this section you see we've built in the ability for the minister to respond to those ongoing changes in need. That's why, Speaker, a lot of the program details will be set out by regulation, which the minister is hard at work on. I think it's necessary, as new events happen, for us to not have to bring a bill into this Legislature every time to make sure a new category of veterans is continuing to be honoured. So that regulation-making ability is very important for us to achieve a modern commission.

I also want to highlight that Ontario, as I mentioned, is actually the only province with this kind of financial

support for veterans. That's because most of that responsibility for veterans' assistance programs lies primarily with the federal government. The Soldiers' Aid Commission is the only provincially funded financial assistance program in Canada specifically serving veterans. The Soldiers' Aid Commission works alongside other programs that are provided by Veterans Affairs Canada to make sure the needs of our veterans are met.

This work today that we're debating is building on those supports. It's building on the supports available to veterans through Veterans Affairs Canada. Those programs include the Veterans Emergency Fund and Assistance Fund, as well as the Legion's poppy fund, and other funds that are available under Veterans Affairs.

I do want to make clear that we by no means are here debating that the federal government should move out of their responsibility in any way. It's very important that they continue to provide that assistance. We're pleased to provide additional assistance specifically related to things that maybe are more local in nature, like employment services for our veterans.

Now, Speaker, I do want to go back to the topic of honouring our veterans. I spoke of John Greenfield and how he's not only a man of words and talk but a man of action. I think it's easy for us—don't get me wrong; I do think it's meaningful that as members, we all appear at Remembrance Day ceremonies every year. I think that's very meaningful to our communities and our veterans. But our work must go beyond talk. We must, as legislators, be people of action, especially as people who are given the power to take action. And so I'm so pleased—and I want to give special recognition to our Minister of Children, Community and Social Services for being the first minister in 18 years to take action on this. The need has been highlighted over and over again, and our Minister of Children, Community and Social Services is finally taking action to honour our veterans in a very practical way.

If you look at some of actions we have taken since we formed government—I remember we were expanding supports to help families relocating because they had a family member who was serving. I'm very proud that we have a government that has not only honoured in our words but honoured in the actions we have taken. I think that's very important, and this must not be the end of that, Speaker. I hope all members of this Legislature continue to think of ways, practical ways, in our actions, that we can honour our veterans. It's a duty we have as part of our remembrance of what they've done.

Again, I want to thank the minister and I want to thank his parliamentary assistant, who I know is here joining us for the debate today, because I know his parliamentary assistant was very involved in the consultations around the modernization, and those consultations will continue as the regulations are unfolding. I, as the member for Durham, as I'm sure many of us are in this place, am eager to support the minister in those consultations to make sure we get the regulations right and that we're supporting our veterans in the most practical way with that financial assistance when they need it most, with those employment services.

0920

I'm honoured to be a part of it, I'm honoured to join the debate, and I think we should all support this bill, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We now have an opportunity for colleagues on both sides of the House to pose questions to the member from Durham and to listen to her responses.

I turn to member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker. It's always an honour to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the many Royal Canadian Legions in my riding: Branch 5 in Chapleau, Branch 429 in Wawa, Branch 169 in White River, Branch 194 in Hornepayne, Branch 242 in Manitowadge, Branch 432 in Massey, Branch 39 in Espanola, Branch 374 on St. Joseph Island, Branch 177 on Manitoulin, Branch 182 in Thessalon, Branch 211 in Bruce Mines, Branch 189 in Blind River; and I'm a member of the Elliot Lake Royal Canadian Legion Branch 561, in Elliot Lake.

It's more of a comment that I want to make: We're not going to be opposing the bill, we're actually going to be very supportive of this bill, and I'm hoping the member—I'm always one to take my place and give credit where credit is due, and I want to give credit to one of our members, Jennie Stevens, who fought for the Soldiers' Aid Commission, has been highlighting this and has been a champion of this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I return to the member from Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Thank you, Speaker. I'll reiterate the comments I shared during the earlier part of my speech, which is that this really should be a non-partisan issue, and I think some of the member opposite's work really shows that. I think it's wonderful to see people from every party coming forward and saying not only should we be honouring our veterans in words, but in action.

So absolutely, as the opposite member said, credit where credit is due, and credit to all parties, including our Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, who was the first one to put that increased funding behind this commission, in addition to modernizing it. I want to highlight that he has made a commitment of \$1.5 million annually to support this work, up from \$250,000 annually.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): To the member from Oakville North–Burlington.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Speaker. I agree with the member from Durham that our veterans have made tremendous sacrifices to protect our province and country, and it's important to honour them, as she said in her remarks.

Could the member advise whether this funding should be exempted for the purposes of social assistance?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the member from Oakville North–Burlington for her question and highlight that, specifically, the commission will be providing up to \$2,000 over a 12-month period to eligible applicants who are in financial need.

What's important, and I think this actually will make the investment go further, is that social assistance—work is ongoing right now to make amendments to the social assistance regulations that, if approved, would exempt this funding for the purpose of social assistance. So I think that will make that \$1.5 million annual investment go a lot further for the people it needs to serve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: Just to the honourable member and her comments, I wanted to bring to light a case for you, and I'm happy to send over media coverage of the case. I was contacted by a gentlemen who served three tours in Afghanistan. His name is Frank Schwenzer. He built a contracting company and concrete, and he was part of the construction crew that built the light-trail transit network.

I would submit through you, Speaker, to the honourable member: Given what was said and what this effort seeks to accomplish, Mr. Schwenzer needs this government's support. He built a massive company, and because of a very awfully flawed construction process, Mr. Schwenzer's life, his family, his business have crumbled. He has PTSD, as do many brave folks who serve. We need to stand by folks. We need to make sure that in every single effort, we stand by folks. This gentleman has a legal case, but I would invite the honourable member and her government to contact Mr. Schwenzer to see what they could do by way of this bill and other measures to support him.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for highlighting this important case. I think it's a constituent of his, Mr. Schwenzer, but I'm not sure. I'm happy to follow up myself on the details and connect him to the right services.

The changes we're debating today—I think you highlight the need for them to move forward as quickly as possible and get this legislation through. The plan is for the new, modernized commission to start providing assistance January 1, 2021. Hopefully, we can all work together to make sure we're ready for that date so that members who have served in Afghanistan can now be eligible for the commission.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Another question?

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: Thank you to the member from Durham for speaking about this bill today. Our veterans have made lots of sacrifices for our country. The veterans have offered the country big sacrifices. Their families have been suffering, and not all the expected support they need to be supported with is available for them. Can the respected member from Durham explain how the changes we did will add more coverage to some of the veterans who are not currently under the coverage, and their families as well?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I want to thank the member for highlighting the important role the commission plays in honouring our veterans. Our veterans have made tremendous sacrifices to make our province and our country a better place, and that's why we're working hard across government to make sure we're there for them when they

need us. Under a modernized commission, with that \$1.5-million annual investment, we're going to be expanding support to all veterans in the province of Ontario. I couldn't be more pleased with the work of our Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question is from the member from Brampton North.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'm proud to stand and talk about this bill. Of course, we are definitely going to support it.

I want to also give a shout-out to some of the branches in the Brampton area: Branch 609 and Branch 15. I just wanted to let people know that we are thinking about you as well.

The only concern I have with this bill is it always appears that we're nickel-and-diming our veterans. I'm hoping, and I'll ask the question to the member opposite, whether this \$2,000-a-year emergency fund—which comes out to, I think I calculated, \$5.47 a day—is available for veterans. I'm also concerned that they will have to go through other funds before they can access this commission fund. They'll have to go through the poppy fund and several others, so I want to make sure that that's not going to be an issue.

Once again, I also want to thank our member from St. Catharines, Jennie Stevens, for bringing this forward and all the efforts she's made lately.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I think that's a great question. It's true, there are multiple levels of government involved in providing supports to veterans, and I don't think it's for us in this Legislature to tell the federal government how to design their programs. We can provide advice, and I know our Minister of Children, Community and Social Services is always eager to do that. What we're here to debate is what the Soldiers' Aid Commission will do in Ontario, and I think it's proper that veterans are looking to the federal government first for their assistance, and then if they're eligible and need further supports here in Ontario, I'm proud that we're the only province with these kinds of financial supports.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question is the member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, through you, I'd like to point something out to the House and the member from Durham.

0930

I was reading through this, and it says that veterans and their families can make applications through Veterans Affairs or their Royal Canadian Legion. There's another organization in this province which is a lot of times forgotten about, and it has been around longer than the Legion; in fact, it was put in place before the veterans act came in. It's called the ANAVETS. It's the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans association. I have a branch in Stratford. They're just like a Legion. But they come to me every once in a while and say, "Nobody mentions the ANAVETS." So I think that's something that we need to be cognizant of, because they do a lot of great work that the Legions do. And I don't want to shortchange the

Legions, but the ANAVETS is an organization throughout Ontario, so I think we need to recognize that.

I see here that the ANAVETS could apply through Veterans Affairs Canada. I guess that's what they would have to do. But I think they would feel snubbed if they had to go through the Legion, because of their organization. So I just wonder if we could be cognizant of that when this legislation goes through.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Durham has 10 seconds to answer that.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Okay. Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, I think it's important for us all to remember that this is first a federal responsibility to provide assistance to our veterans, and that's absolutely appropriate. We're not here to debate our Constitution. But again, we're really proud to have this program in Ontario that provides additional supports to Ontario veterans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a real privilege to be able to stand today in this Legislature to really honour the service, the commitment and the dedication of the members of our military here in Ontario and in Canada with this bill, Bill 202, the Soldiers' Aid Commission Act.

I want to begin by acknowledging the advocacy of my colleague the member for St. Catharines who really brought this issue to the attention of the government and is the impetus for the legislation that we see before us today. Of course, MPPs will recall that last March, there was a shocking story of an Afghanistan veteran, Phillip Kitchen, who was homeless, living in a tent with his infant child, his wife and his dog. He had returned home from Afghanistan suffering from PTSD, and yet discovered that he was not eligible to access any support from the Ontario Soldiers' Aid Commission. When that story emerged in the media, for one thing, it made people aware that there was a Soldiers' Aid Commission, because there wasn't a lot of recognition of the work of that body; but for another thing, it raised the question: Why are modern-day veterans like Phillip Kitchen not eligible to access funding from the Soldiers' Aid Commission?

This legislation deals with that issue. It enables veterans of more recent conflicts like Afghanistan and Rwanda and others to access funding from the Soldiers' Aid Commission, because at the time that we learned of this situation, it came to light that the commission had a \$253,000 budget and more than 60% of that was unspent. It was money that was allocated to support veterans, and it was just not being spent, because there were over 200,000 veterans in this province who were deemed not eligible to access or apply for those funds.

The mandate of the Soldiers' Aid Commission had not been updated since 1970, and this legislation updates that mandate and is an important step forward. But of course, as my colleague the member from St. Catharines pointed out in her remarks when this legislation was first brought forward for second reading debate, this is enabling legislation. Much of the effectiveness of the new processes, the new mandate of the Soldiers' Aid Commission, will be linked to the application processes that are put in place.

We certainly do not want to see a cumbersome process that will require veterans to jump through hoops or navigate bureaucracy in order to access the funding that is available. These \$2,000 grants could make a real difference for a veteran who is struggling with PTSD, who needs access to support for medications, for housing, for clothing, for a number of things, so we want to make sure that the application process is as seamless and easy to navigate as possible.

Speaker, one thing that remains the same with the mandate of the Soldiers' Aid Commission is that the funds that are available are only to be accessed after other sources of funding have already been pursued. Of course, a very significant source of funding is the Royal Canadian Legion Poppy Fund, so I want to give shout-out to all the Legions across this country that participate every year in the poppy drive and raise those critical funds to support veterans and their families.

In particular, as the member for London West, I want to recognize the Byron-Springbank Legion Branch 533, which is the only Legion that is located in my riding. But it is one of the largest Legions, certainly, in London and I suspect across the province. The Byron Legion was chartered in 1952, so it has a long history in our community. There are more than 600 members, and I am proud to call myself a member of the Legion. Those members support the really vital fundraising efforts that the Legion undertakes. Just in last year's poppy campaign, the Byron Legion raised \$43,000. In the last five years alone, the Byron Legion has been able to raise \$240,000. That is money that becomes available to support veterans and their families, to support youth education programs and other services in our community.

I just want to give you a sense of the breadth of support that is available because of the efforts of the Byron Legion in the London area. Donations have gone to support the Veterans Care Program at Parkwood Institute and helped with the purchase of specialized beds, mattresses and lifts. Funds have also gone toward the Operational Stress Injury Clinic and the virtual reality therapy equipment that is available at Parkwood.

There has been support available for veterans who live in retirement homes and long-term-care facilities. There has been emergency financial support made available for veterans. There have been student bursaries provided for children of veterans to attend post-secondary institutions, and of course the very important youth education programs that are delivered in elementary and secondary schools. So we are very grateful in the London community for the work of the Byron Legion in supporting veterans who live in London.

But the Byron Legion, like many Legions across this province, is struggling and there are real concerns about the poppy campaign this year and what kinds of funds will be able to be raised with physical distancing and the impact that will have, especially after Legions have gone through a period of COVID-19 lockdown. The Byron Legion was in the fortunate position of having a comfortable reserve, but even those reserve funds have been depleted significantly because of COVID-19, because like

all Legions, the Byron Legion had to cancel any booked banquets or events in its reception halls and no longer was getting revenues from bar sales. As a result, they were down significantly in revenues but they were still paying bills, Speaker. They had utility bills; they had insurance bills. In my conversation with the Byron Legion, they estimate that they're down about \$25,000 that has been taken out of their reserves to deal with the impact of COVID-19.

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Now, the Byron Legion is not at risk of closing, which is a very positive thing for our community, but we know that across the province, there are an estimated 124 Legion branches that are at risk of closing permanently, and an estimated more than 350 Legions that are facing financial hardship as every Legion, regardless of the size of their reserves, still had to access that reserve funding in order to make those payments—the rent, the mortgage, the hydro—those other hard costs that you have to keep paying during COVID-19.

And while the government's program that was announced in the summer to help Legions fundraise so that they can bring some much-needed revenues in—while that was welcomed, there are real concerns that this money is not being directed to enabling Legions to pay those bills that they must continue paying. That's why in London, another branch of the Royal Canadian Legion which is located in the riding of my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe, the Victory Branch, this summer started a bottle drive just to try to bring in some much-needed funding to pay those bills, to pay the utility bills, the insurance bills. The Victory Legion estimated that they needed about \$3,000 a month. That was their basic costs. They started this bottle drive and I understand that they have been able to raise, since June, \$35,000, which I think speaks very much to the fact that people want to support Legions. They want to make sure that Legion services are there for veterans who are struggling and who turn to a Legion for support.

The other thing I wanted to talk about that's specific to my community but also very much related to the Soldiers' Aid Commission is the fact that London, also this summer, in July, was the first community in the country, the first city in the country, that undertook to create a database on homeless veterans. This database will provide real-time information to track homeless veterans. The database was undertaken with support from Built for Zero Canada, which is an organization that is focused on addressing veteran homelessness and chronic homelessness and is working with various municipalities across Canada to develop by-name lists of homeless veterans. In July, when this database was created in the city of London, 20 veterans were identified as being on the list of veterans who are homeless. Those 20 are part of a much bigger list of 1,000 people in London who are experiencing chronic homelessness.

We know a report from the Canadian Press said that there are more than 2,250 veterans country-wide across Canada who are homeless. So the problem of veteran

homelessness is very real. It is real in London, it is real across Ontario and it is real across Canada.

One of the comments that was made by the director of Built for Zero Canada, the organization that is working to create these databases, is to emphasize the fact that the list itself is not going to address the problem of veteran homelessness, but it does give a sense of where people are coming from prior to their not being able to find stable housing.

In a comment from the London Free Press, somebody from the city noted that, "While there are a couple of veteran-specific resources in the community, most housing placements for veterans look the same as housing placements for other people experiencing homelessness. Right now, units are a scarce resource."

I think that this really highlights the fact that although the budget for the Soldiers' Aid Commission has been increased, and that's a welcome increase for all the veterans who will now be eligible to apply for that assistance, there is still much, much more that is needed to actually support veterans in our communities.

Finally, Speaker, before I close, I wanted to share with this Legislature the story of a very important and significant former member of the London community, and that is Trooper Mark Wilson. Trooper Wilson was a veteran of Afghanistan, born and raised in London. He was killed in 2006 in Afghanistan. He was the 40th Canadian soldier to die in Afghanistan. He was also a husband, Speaker. He was a father of two sons. He was a loyal son to his mother Carolyn Wilson, London Silver Cross Mother, and his father Carl Wilson. He was a brother to his family as well.

He joined the military in 2001 at the age of 35, so he made a late career entry into the military, and he was deployed to Afghanistan in the summer of 2006. In a recent biography of Mark's story, they say, "Mark had a burning desire to serve his country as part of the worldwide action to combat terrorism, tyranny and oppression in that war-torn land." He was motivated by the desire to serve his country and to help people in Afghanistan. He was deployed in the summer of 2006.

The story goes on to say, "It wasn't long, however, before the truth smacked Canadians squarely between the eyes, as the number of soldiers returning in caskets began to increase steadily. For the Wilson family, the real eye-opener came in early October when they received a call from their shaken son. It was the first time they'd heard distress in his voice."

Trooper Mark Wilson died in service in Afghanistan, but others who served with him came back. They came back to Canada, they came back to Ontario; they came back to the communities that all of us represent. They deserve to be able to access the kind of support that is provided by the Soldiers' Aid Commission.

This is a positive step forward, Speaker, the updating of the mandate, the modernizing and enabling of legislation, so that all of those veterans—93% of veterans in Ontario had previously been excluded from accessing support from the Soldiers' Aid Commission and now they will be able

to apply. So that is a positive step forward and it is certainly something that all of us on this side of the House, wherever we sit, can support.

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But at the same time, as I mentioned, funds from the commission are to be used as a last resort, so we must make sure that those supports are available for Legions, who provide funding through the poppy campaign to support veterans, and for housing, given the number of veterans who are living in homelessness. That is a much broader issue that this government has to acknowledge. We know that veterans have been disproportionately impacted by cuts to the homelessness prevention initiative, and we have yet to see the kind of investment in housing that so many people in our communities deserve and have not been able to access.

With that, Speaker, I look forward to questions and comments from members in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Yes, we do have about 10 minutes for questions and responses. I turn to the members of the government. The member for Mississauga—Erin Mills.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I really respected the point of view of the opposition. I am a member of the Streetsville Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 139, at Streetsville. I lost an uncle in the war in 1969. I was a very young kid, but still I can always refer to that in the family, remembering a member of the family who has been lost in the war as a respected army officer.

I understand that from the point of view of the opposition, the respected member was trying to refer to the amount of the money. I understand that, but does the member agree with me that this is the first time a recognition to the veterans and their families—and the changes will open the door for more to come?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: When you make a program available to the 93% of veterans who had previously not been able to access it, you'd better increase the funding that's in that program.

I appreciate the government's commitment to increasing the amount of funding that is allocated to the Soldiers' Aid Commission, but I am also concerned about the lack of supports that veterans continue to experience in our communities, especially around homelessness. We know that veterans make up a much larger proportion of the people who are living in chronic homelessness than others.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further questions?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you so much for this debate. I also want to start from a place of gratitude, first to the Royal Canadian Legion's Branches 50 and 412 in my riding in Kitchener Centre, and also to the MPP from St. Catharines, who has been such a solid advocate for these changes and amendments.

I'd actually like to ask the member to speak more about the need for additional support, to see this as a starting point to ensure that we don't have more veterans that are experiencing homelessness. I know that in the Street Needs Assessment in 2018 in the city of Toronto, they

found that 13% of the people that were experiencing homelessness were veterans. So I really do want to give the member some time to speak about the importance of seeing this as a starting point and not as an end point.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much to my colleague the member for Kitchener Centre for her question. Yes, absolutely, and we know that the veterans of modern conflicts, just as veterans of earlier conflicts, are returning and often struggling with PTSD.

PTSD is not something that is easily resolved with a \$2,000 grant. PTSD can result in people becoming chronically homeless, which is what had happened to Phillip Kitchen, the Afghanistan veteran whose story came to light last March. He returned from Afghanistan, he was struggling with PTSD and he was not able to access the support from the Soldiers' Aid Commission.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further questions?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'm pleased to hear the member from London West believes this increase in funding is a positive step forward, and it's to ensure that support reaches the next generation of servicemen and -women.

I note that in other jurisdictions such as New Brunswick, Alberta and Saskatchewan, they also have programs, but the programs are all non-financial programs for veterans for such things as family settlement programs and a veterans' information line; they're not actually financial programs. Do you have any other suggestions that you think we ought to be including going forward in terms of improving what we're doing here today?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much for the question. In my remarks, I spoke at length about the efforts of the Byron Legion to raise donations through the poppy fund to support veterans in my community, and I also talked about the fact that hundreds of Legions across this province are at risk of closing their doors. Legions need direct support from this government for those fixed costs that they have had to continue to pay throughout the COVID-19 lockdown. That is certainly something that this government could easily do to support Legions and, through those Legions, to better support veterans in the communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member from London West covered quite a variety of topics when she spoke on this bill. She also mentioned Trooper Mark Wilson, whose parents, Carl and Carolyn, actually reside in my riding, and what a great family. There's actually a street named after Trooper Wilson in our riding, as well, to honour veterans. I think everyone here has the same sentiment when we speak about men and women who have served and protect our country and abroad, and how grateful we are to them.

This is a good step forward with the Soldiers' Aid Commission program, but I wanted to ask the member if she could speak to the Soldiers' Aid Commission program and how it could be improved, so it is a smoother process

with the effectiveness to actually help veterans and their families, because there is the one piece where they've got to exhaust so many funds. Would that be helpful, if there was a smoother process to get the resources they need?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague the member for London—Fanshawe for her question. One of the concerns, of course, is that this legislation is simply enabling legislation, so we don't know what the new process will be. There has not been an update to the legislation since 1970, so much of the effectiveness of accessing the new grants will rely on the processes that are put in place for veterans to access commission funding. We do need, absolutely, to ensure that barriers are not created for veterans; that they're not forced to jump through hoops, to do inordinate amounts of paperwork; that the processes are easy to navigate. That all has to be in place, and we will be monitoring that closely.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further questions?

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Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you, member from London West. I too am very touched by the veterans. I come from Hong Kong, and we had the Canadian Forces, thousands of them, come over to Hong Kong when we had the Second World War. In fact, over 1,900 of them sacrificed their lives in the protection of people in Hong Kong, not only those in Canada. I am really, really touched by that.

I would like to ask the member opposite: When the veterans come back, what kind of employment support can we give to them?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: That is an excellent question because that is another reality that too many returning veterans face. They come back suffering from PTSD, from other trauma from their service, and reintegrating into the labour market is very, very challenging. We know that.

We need to have programs that are specific to the needs of veterans, that understand their experiences, to help them re-enter the labour market, because homelessness is related not only to some of the mental health challenges that veterans are experiencing but also the lack of access to income. If they can't get employment, if they can't return to education, they can't get housing, and then they end up in chronic homelessness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for further debate.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I will be sharing my time this morning with the member from Ottawa South.

It's an honour to speak about the valued role that members of the Canadian Forces and our veterans play in our country, and in particular what has become affectionately known as "CFB Orléans." So many families from the community that I grew up in, that I call home and have the honour of representing here in this Legislature, have sacrificed in ways that we can only begin to imagine. They have sacrificed time away from their family. They've sacrificed the stability of their family. They've sacrificed their bodies and their minds, and some, of course, have given the ultimate sacrifice. We owe it to members of the

Canadian Forces, and our veterans and their families, to ensure that their bodies and souls are cared for.

I still remember very clearly, Mr. Speaker, the Sunday dinner when my brother told us he was going to Afghanistan. That was a very difficult night. It was filled with lots of emotions, but of course, pride being the one that came to the forefront.

Continuing and modernizing the Soldiers' Aid Commission is important, and we must ensure that Ontario supports this new generation of veterans in the ways that we always have. I want to thank very much my former council colleague Deputy Mayor Matthew Luloff from the city of Ottawa, who is city council liaison for military and veterans' affairs, who is also an Afghanistan veteran, for calling attention to a very important issue CAF members and veterans are facing here in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, as you may know, regular force and full-time employed Canadian Forces reservists benefit from the full range of health care services provided by the Canadian Forces medical services, and they are not entitled to provincial health benefits. This creates some challenges for many military families. While the CAF members themselves receive excellent medical care through the armed forces, their families don't. They access these services through the provincial health care system. Military families often find it difficult to secure a family physician as a result of multiple relocations across the country. Without a family physician, families face lengthy wait times for referrals, prescription refills and other specialist care. Military families can miss periodic health assessments, routine screenings, immunizations and preventive care.

For military families with children with special needs, the challenge of not having a family doctor can have extreme consequences for timely diagnosis, referrals to other specialized care, and educational supports.

The families of military members with physical or mental illness may have to deal with changing behaviours and intense relationship dynamics. Family members are also often the primary informal caregiver, which can lead to negative physical and mental health consequences for them as well as for the ill or injured military member. As we all know, Mr. Speaker, in rural locations, specialist care, if available at all, may be hours away.

Five thousand members of the armed forces retire each year, and most of those retirees live here in Ontario. For years, these brave men and women have served our nation and received medical care as part of their service. As they integrate back into the community, they now require a family physician to take care of their sometimes—often—complex health needs. What's not widely known is that when they are released from service, these Canadian Forces members are on their own to try to find a family physician and access the provincial health care system. This often means that after years of serving their country, perhaps suffering from some form of physical or mental injury, these brave men and women now have to search for a primary care physician, with many of them ending up on a wait-list.

I mentioned the 5,000 members of the CAF that retire each and every year, many of whom end up in Ontario, and there are another 1,000 members of the forces that are released for medical reasons, mostly due to permanent employment limitations of a physical nature, but about 40% are released because of employment limitations of a mental health illness. So imagine now, you've served your country bravely for years, perhaps decades, and as a result of your service, you have a physical or mental health condition that limits your ability to remain employed, and now we ask you to go out and find your own family doctor and wait on a wait-list.

I want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that these are not criticisms of the bill or the government. These issues have been around for a long time. Rather, I'd like these concerns to be taken as a call to action as we continue to look for ways to improve Bill 202 as it makes its way through the process to engage with veterans, to engage with members of the Canadian Forces and their families, to understand how their day-to-day health and medical needs can be addressed through the provincial health system, to ensure that the gaps that military families and veterans are facing today can be addressed, whether it's through the Soldiers' Aid Commission or by any other means. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member did say he'd be sharing his time. I turn now to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 202. I want to thank the minister and the government for bringing it forward and for the additional funds that will be put in there. It's a small thing, but it's an important thing, an important recognition.

The expansion of the criteria mirrors what has happened in Ontario in long-term care—which is the definition of a “new veteran.” For the longest time, the only people who could get into long-term care were active combat veterans in World War I, World War II and Korea. You can imagine there weren't a lot of those, so those beds were going unused. I was pleased, when we were in government, when we moved forward to work with the federal government to do that.

One of the challenges here—and I don't want to say it's a pox on all our houses, but it's the incremental movement towards what's needed in areas like this. It's often slow. I don't know if people or members would remember that 13 years ago we actually had a 90-day waiting period for military families. So if you came back to Ontario, you didn't get OHIP for 90 days. That's incredible. That got waived in 2007. It was the right thing to do. That was actually the member's predecessor in Orléans, Phil McNeely. It was an important initiative. Again, our work wasn't done.

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So when the member's talking right now about primary care and the importance of ensuring that military families have access to a primary care practitioner when they come to Ontario, or when a military member, a veteran, who is out of the forces and requires primary care and mental

health care—things like mental health care and access to other services—that it's there for them. This is one of the things that is going to require work with the federal government. It's really very important. It's just like that hole that existed in 2006 where families couldn't get coverage. Often, when transfers were happening, people were scrambling.

We're going to pass this. We all agree. We all know that we have to recognize the contribution and the service of our veterans and members of the military. So we're going to do this, there's no question about that. But we need to move on to other things, as the member for Orléans has suggested, and that issue around primary care and access to care for families is a critical one for them.

As you can imagine, if you're moving into a community that may not be like Ottawa or London, and you're transferred to a base that's maybe more remote, something like Petawawa, or another base in Ontario, it's hard to find a primary care practitioner even if you're not someone who is just transferring in, if you're a resident there. So there's a lot of work to be done there.

I think there is a lot of good work to be done with the federal government. I encourage the government to do that work, and I also want to thank them for bringing this forward. It's something, I would have to say, that should have been done, we can all agree, sooner rather than later. But let's not forget that once this work is done, there's a lot more work to be done to recognize, acknowledge and, quite frankly, protect our veterans and our service members who sacrifice so much for our communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'd like to thank both of my colleagues from the Ottawa area for their speeches and their remarks on this really important piece of legislation. I want to take a moment to thank the member for Orléans for sharing the story of his brother's service. We certainly thank your brother for stepping forward to serve our country.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is: I wondered if the member for Orléans could discuss his thoughts on us adding in employability readiness as one of the things that folks can apply to the Soldiers' Aid Commission for assistance with. Do you think this is a good thing to be adding to the list of eligible things that veterans and their families can get support with through the Soldiers' Aid Commission?

Mr. Stephen Blais: Thank you for the question. I think, certainly, retired forces members—veterans—and their families are best positioned to understand what their needs are when exiting the forces. If their needs are related to transition assistance to find a job, then that is something that we should be very supportive of.

In the city of Ottawa, we developed a priority program, working with the Helmets to Hardhats group to ensure that Canadian Armed Forces veterans were given priority for certain job classifications. I think that's the type of program that I would encourage across Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COVID-19 RESPONSE
IN BEACHES—EAST YORK

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: People in Beaches—East York, as elsewhere in the province, are furious with the chaos that this government has unleashed with its refusal to listen to SickKids and other health experts and cap all classes at 15, or to prepare for the fall and a second wave of COVID-19.

A couple of weeks ago, I told the Premier about grade 4 classes of 28 and 29 kids at a school in my riding. That school is now one of hundreds in the province dealing with COVID cases. Parents who have to pull their kids out of school because they have the sniffles have had to wait for over five hours for a test at Michael Garron Hospital. Sometimes it takes three days for test results. That's four days that a parent isn't working because their child can't go back to school without a negative test result.

Yesterday, with 700 new cases in Ontario, the government decided it was a fine time to open casinos. I've heard from frustrated public service workers in the riding whose workplaces are poorly vented, and where there is little separation between desks, that they are soon expected back at the office.

Why, Speaker? Why risk lives? Why risk productivity and jobs and small businesses that can't afford another shutdown? Why risk the planned surgeries that are saving lives from other conditions? This isn't a plan. It's a public health disaster, and the people of Ontario deserve so much better.

LINDA AND KEITH ROBINSON

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise today to recognize Linda and Keith Robinson, members of the Morrisburg and District Lions Club and residents of my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. I wish to recognize these Lions for their unselfish actions and community spirit.

Linda has been delivering groceries ordered through a local food store, Laura's Valu-mart, in Morrisburg since the beginning of the pandemic, COVID-19. She has been delivering these orders to seniors, community members with disabilities and shut-ins on behalf of her club. The deliveries have been to many places throughout the riding, including Chesterville, Ault Island, Aultsville Road, Williamsburg and Iroquois.

Keith, her husband, spearheaded the refurbishment of a church mural that has stood for many years at the intersection of Highway 2 and Church Road Riverside Heights. The mural underwent a complex refurbishment to rejuvenate this community heirloom that will now stand as a tribute to our heritage and our history for many years to come.

These unselfish acts are a tribute to our strong community fabric and the backbone of our life in our strong and proud riding. Again, I want to thank Linda and Keith for their community spirit and concern.

KARL DOCKSTADER

Mr. Jeff Burch: I rise today in support of Karl Dockstader, a journalist in the Niagara region and host of One Dish, One Mic on 610 CKTB. Karl is an award-winning journalist and this year was the co-recipient of the 2020 CJP-CBC Indigenous Journalism Fellowship.

On September 2, Karl was reporting on the ongoing land dispute between members of Six Nations, the band council and a development company over the Haldimand tract. When confronted by the OPP, Karl presented them his card and identified himself as a journalist. He was subsequently arrested. The next day, Mohawk researcher and freelance journalist Courtney Skye was also arrested. Their arrests ban them from the site.

Speaker, this is simply abhorrent. Karl's arrest speaks to two broader, unacceptable patterns. The first is the ongoing, long-standing colonial pattern of criminalization of Indigenous people. The second is a more recent pattern of the police laying charges against journalists and researchers for covering land disputes between the government and Indigenous people. Mr. Dockstader has a constitutional right to cover matters that are of interest to the public. His arrest and subsequent banning from the site undermine his ability to do so. The police are not the deciders of who is and is not a journalist.

We cannot be meaningfully working on reconciliation if we are using the same colonial tactics against Indigenous people. From lack of action on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to the arrest of Indigenous journalists like Karl and Courtney, it's abundantly clear that we have a lot of work to do.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Earlier this month, I met with Oakville's Energy Task Force, which is planning a community-driven energy transformation for Oakville. The task force is led by community groups, the local municipalities and prominent local businesses. One of their goals is to work towards carbon neutrality by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50% by 2041. They are committed to reducing energy use and building a green economy.

Our government is also committed to reducing greenhouse gases, protecting the natural environment and preserving our greenbelt. In August, our government launched Ontario's first-ever climate change impact assessment. The study will use the best science to understand how climate change will affect our communities, infrastructure and the environment, while helping to strengthen the province's resilience to climate change.

We are also protecting our water through the Great Lakes Local Action Fund, providing up to \$50,000 to local projects to improve water quality. With this program and others, we are investing about \$7.5 million to help our Great Lakes.

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In my community, our government has funded \$75,000 for four rain gardens to divert waste water from flooding

into our lakes and streams. This project is driven by local volunteers and demonstrates the importance of thinking globally and acting locally.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: One of the last in-person events before the pandemic took hold was the grand opening of the IPS Action Centre in Oshawa. In the devastating wake of GM abandoning our community, the GM Unifor action centre and the IPS Action Centre were created to support GM workers and independent parts supplier workers. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, their re-employment, resume and retraining services can't help unemployed auto workers find work that isn't there.

Before the pandemic, Oshawa and folks across Durham region were already struggling in the aftermath of GM's decision. That meant that EI claims had already been started, and it means they will be running out in the next few weeks. Distraught auto workers were directed to continue to stay on EI while CERB began for others in April. Many workers have been unable to secure work because of the pandemic. Already for some, and soon for others, they will have no CERB and they won't be able to support their families.

I'm pushing the federal government to remember auto workers and families. What will be done to protect or assist those vulnerable workers? How will they pay rent or their mortgages? How will they buy groceries or pay their bills to keep the heat and the lights on? We're asking the feds to show leadership, but I'm asking the province to show up for auto workers too.

Auto workers need support—direct financial support or employment. I've stood here in this House reading petitions, letters and asking ministers to push for manufacturing in Oshawa of much-needed N95 masks. Canada needs N95s, and we have the workforce, the capacity, the need and the hope. I've been asking this government for a long time to have some faith in the future of Oshawa, but right now, we need more than faith; we need your help.

RUTH BADER GINSBURG

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just 11 days ago, on September 18, Ruth Bader Ginsburg died at the age of 87. She was, as the Economist remarked in their obituary, "the liberal conscience of America's Supreme Court."

Now here in Canada, we're preoccupied with many things as we battle COVID-19, so what is it about the death of this woman that has made so many of us take notice? And why are so many of us mourning her passing?

The easiest answer to that question is that anything that happens in the United States that is of political consequence has an impact on us here in Canada, but I believe that there's much more to it than that. Ruth Bader Ginsburg fought for peace, justice and equality literally her entire life. She never stopped pushing her nation and the world, using her intellect and the positions she held to improve the lives of women and marginalized people.

She heroically continued to do her job as a Supreme Court justice to the very end of her life. She knew full well that once she was no longer on that bench, the current president, Donald Trump, would work quickly to appoint a conservative judge whose mission it would be to undo much of the progress that has been won, particularly for women, over the years. And that is exactly what is happening.

I was born in the 1950s. I know the work is not done, but I also know exactly how far we've come in recognizing the rights of women to play a more equal role in society, to have the right to choose what happens in our bodies. We have developed a social safety net that's not perfect, but it's so much better than it was 100 years ago. Ruth Bader Ginsburg has been part of that progress. She's been a force for caring and for good in the USA and in the world. All of us who care about the progress we have made miss her dearly already.

We Canadians will have to watch now as a segment of the American population, led at the moment by Donald Trump, attempts to turn back the clock. Our job is to ensure that the same doesn't happen here.

KOREAN HARVEST FESTIVAL

Mr. Stan Cho: My community of Willowdale is home to one of the largest Korean festivals in Canada, attracting tens of thousands of people every year from the GTA to enjoy traditional Korean dancing, drumming, interactive games, singing competitions and over 25 food and snack vendors in celebration of Korean Thanksgiving. I have very fond memories of the Korean Harvest Festival with my friends and family, and I've had the pleasure of serving as the master of ceremonies a number of years.

The Korean Harvest Festival has been a staple in Willowdale for Korean and non-Korean Canadians alike, and although we'll miss celebrating in person this year, I'm incredibly proud of the community for pulling together to take the festival online.

Chuseok, or Korean Thanksgiving, is just days away, and as many Korean Canadian families in Ontario and across Canada prepare to gather this week, I want to remind everybody to stay safe and exercise every precaution, but get out there and enjoy some Korean snacks, like japchae, tteokbokki, soondae. I've made myself entirely hungry right now, but, Mr. Speaker, I hope you do get to enjoy those snacks. Happy Chuseok, everybody.

CARROUSEL OF THE NATIONS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today I'm pleased to recognize the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County and Carrousel of the Nations, which was just named top festival by Attractions Ontario in the Ontario's Choice Awards.

The multicultural council was founded over 45 years ago. Since that time, Windsor has grown to become the fourth most diverse city in Canada. Over the years, the council has expanded to meet the needs of the community

with a wide variety of programs and resources, such as after-school programs, services for refugees and sponsors, health initiatives, language services, settlement services and diversity training.

Carrousel of the Nations is the multicultural council's premiere event. The annual showcase is the oldest cultural festival in all of Ontario. However, like most special events and attractions this summer, the Carrousel of the Nations faced the unprecedented challenge of adapting their programming during the pandemic.

In previous years, villages representing various nations would pop up across Windsor and Essex county, where festival attendees could sample cultural dishes and watch vibrant performances. Instead, this year we saw Carrousel@Home, a two-day virtual event where organizers did a fantastic job of ensuring that the show did go on. Performances, cultural presentations and over 20 national villages were displayed for our community to engage with and enjoy. Speaker, I was proud to join them in the virtual Carrousel of the Nations, but I sure missed all the different food from the different villages.

My sincere congratulations to the multicultural council of Windsor-Essex and the Carrousel of the Nations organizers, volunteers and participants on winning this prestigious award. Speaker, Carrousel of the Nations is also in the running for the top attraction of the year. I'm crossing my fingers that I'll be recognizing them once again when they've succeeded in winning that award too.

JOHN SICARD

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It is my pleasure to rise this morning in the Legislature to recognize a great citizen of the city of Ottawa. John Sicard, CEO of Kinaxis, a supply chain management tech company, has been named Ottawa's 2020 CEO of the Year. Presented by the Ottawa Business Journal and the Ottawa Board of Trade, the CEO of the Year is awarded each year to an outstanding business leader in the greater Ottawa community.

Mr. Sicard has been a champion in business, as Kinaxis was recently named one of the Toronto Stock Exchange's top 30 performers of the past three years. Kinaxis has also been a champion for our community.

John and his wife, Pina, are proud parents of several boys. Their youngest son, Nicholas, is on the autism spectrum. Nicholas inspired John to create Autism at Work. Autism at Work is an initiative designed to leverage the unique talents of individuals on the autism spectrum and provide meaningful, sustained employment to this underutilized talent pool.

When he started, the goal was to have 1% of its workforce comprised of people on the autism spectrum. Today, nearly 2% of the company's workforce is on the spectrum. "I think diversity is the path to innovation," John said. "This is not a charity. These are phenomenal brains that just happen to be wired a little differently. Aren't we all?"

Thank you to 2020 CEO of the Year John Sicard for all you do to make Ottawa the wonderful community that it is. Congratulations.

WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I rise today in the House to speak about a project that has united local residents in Niagara West, and that is the redevelopment of our local West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, a campaign that has brought together neighbours, businesses, municipalities and front-line care providers in our community.

An important step forward in building the new hospital: I was pleased to announce in July the selection of architecture firms B+H Architects and mcCallumSather as the performance, design and conformity team for the eagerly anticipated project. The selection of the two firms to prepare project documents and output specifications for the new hospital is a significant milestone. This is the furthest we have ever come to seeing shovels in the ground, and I know we will.

Features of the new hospital include:

- a 24-hour emergency department;
- maternal and newborn services;
- day surgical services; and
- advanced diagnostics, including X-ray, mammography, ultrasound and a CT scanner.

As I continue to work closely with provincial and municipal partners and Hamilton Health Sciences on this key project, I want to thank the Premier, as well as Christine Elliott, the Minister of Health, for her important support, as well as our local front-line care providers and the passionate volunteers involved with the save and rebuild campaign. Together, we will build the new hospital that west Niagara deserves.

1030

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members' statements for this morning.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report entitled Expenditure Monitor 2020-21: Q1, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is for the Premier.

Why has this Premier and his government failed beyond belief to prepare for the second wave of COVID-19, even though everybody knew it was coming? And why are they now doing so little to mitigate its impacts?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the question. In fact, we have done a significant amount to prepare for a second wave. We've been

working on this throughout the summer months knowing that a second wave would be coming. It's more complicated to deal with than the first wave because we also have flu season approaching.

We also have several hundred thousand cases of procedures and surgeries that were postponed during the first wave that now must be addressed, and we have diminished capacity in some of our hospitals because of the necessary decanting of patients from long-term-care homes into hospitals for infection prevention and control.

But we do have a six-pronged plan that is dealing with all of these issues, which is building on the initiatives that we started since the beginning of COVID-19 but ramping up our capacity significantly in dealing with all of the issues that I just mentioned. We are ready for wave 2 and we are dealing with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, unfortunately, the Premier and his ministers are about the only ones who believe they are actually stepping up to the plate and dealing with the second wave appropriately. Public health experts around Ontario, doctors, people who work in long-term care, those front-line workers, long-term-care home operators, SickKids hospital, hospitals all around the province—everybody is saying that this government needs to do much, much more than it's been doing.

When is the Premier going to start listening to experts that are outside his inner circle, and stop cutting corners and trying to save a buck at the expense of public health, and take real action to fight COVID-19?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, in fact, the fall preparedness plan was informed by significant consultations with outside people, including 45 consultations with over 300 experts in health. It's also been informed by our Chief Medical Officer of Health and all of the public health experts that are around the public health table that have been giving advice to us on what we need to do.

We've done that. We have prepared for all of those issues in our plan, and we have put significant money into ramping up our resources, including over \$1 billion into enhancing our testing, tracing and isolating capabilities. So we have both the experts' advice and we have put the money into the plan, and the plan is being worked on and being implemented as we speak to deal with COVID-19 and the second wave.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, stronger measures to mitigate and fight back against the COVID-19 second wave are happening across Canada. Is the Premier prepared today to invest the money necessary to provide direct financial assistance, direct financial support, to businesses and individuals that will allow Ontario to fight the virus while at the same time providing Ontarians the economic security that they need and that they deserve?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Stan Cho: Our government certainly recognizes the challenging times that are COVID-19 in this time of global uncertainty. That's why we announced on March 25 a total of \$17 billion in direct supports for our health care system and people and small businesses throughout this great province.

But Mr. Speaker, as the pandemic progressed, we realized that that wasn't enough. That's why in August our government committed a total of \$30 billion. That's an increase of \$7.3 billion for individuals, small businesses and job creators throughout this province.

Mr. Speaker, these are uncertain times, but we know that the people of Ontario are strong, and we will weather this storm together.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This next question is for the Premier. The government's failure and this Premier's failure to properly prepare for a second wave is going to have the most devastating consequences in long-term care.

Yesterday, two more residents died at the West End Villa in Ottawa, bringing that death toll to 15 residents in that one long-term-care home since August. Now, new outbreaks in long-term care are up to 44.

The Premier says he's listening to his experts. In a letter last week, long-term-care operators, doctors and residents all warned that they were not ready, that long-term care was not ready, not prepared, for the second wave of COVID-19. Who are the experts, Speaker, who are telling the Premier that long-term-care homes are prepared for a second wave?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you who isn't an expert. The Leader of the Opposition isn't an expert because she's been nowhere to be found for the last six months as each and every of us has been working 180 days, every single day, 24/7.

I'll just inform the Leader of the Opposition what was done on the second plan. We're hiring 3,700 more people in the health care sector. We're putting \$1 billion towards tracing and testing throughout the entire province. We're putting \$283.7 million for the backlogged surgeries, and we're going to continue rolling out the support that the people of Ontario need. But Mr. Speaker, any time the Leader of the Opposition wants me to inform her on what's really going on in the province, I'd be more than happy to sit down with her.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, again, the Premier seems to be the only one that thinks his plan is working. In transcripts that were published yesterday from the government's own long-term-care commission, the long-term-care ministry makes it clear that proactive inspections of long-term care were not happening before the first wave of COVID-19 hit those long-term-care facilities, even as the Ford government insisted that there was an iron ring around long-term care.

Now, once again, the ministry is insisting that they are ready for a second wave, even as home operators, front-line workers and residents and their families insist that they are not. The Premier says he listens to the experts. Who are the experts that are telling him that the second wave of COVID-19 is not going to be a problem in long-term care because they're ready for it?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We have never stopped working since the planning began in February to make sure that our homes had every available resource for them during the first wave. This was a globally evolving pandemic in the first wave, but we know a lot more now.

If we look at the science, we understand about asymptomatic spread. We have the testing available. That was globally competed for in the first wave. The PPE supply is robust, and thank you to the Premier for all his efforts to revamp the procurement process. We are in a very different situation, and I remind people that an outbreak in long-term care can mean one staff member self-isolating at home, and that is the majority of our situation right now in outbreaks. It is one staff member. So we are holding; our homes are holding. They are at the front lines. We will continue to pour every resource that we have into them to shore them up, supply them with the resources that they need. All day, all night—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When it comes to long-term care, it really is not clear at all who this government is listening to. The people who run the homes, the people who maintain those homes, the people who are families of residents who live in those homes are all saying the same thing: "We are not yet ready for a second wave of COVID-19." That's what they are saying. They're pleading with this government to get them some more capacity for things like infection control. Infection specialists are what they're looking for. They're looking for more funding to hire more physicians so that they'll be able to be on-site to deal with outbreaks when they occur. They are being ignored by this government even as outbreaks spread to residents and that residents actually are losing their lives again.

1040

So if the Premier is actually listening to experts, who are the experts? Who are the folks who are telling this Premier that everything is kosher in long-term care in terms of a second wave?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for the question. There are lessons learned from the first wave. There is no doubt about that. We have been listening to the sector on an urgent basis, understanding what their needs are.

Again, some of these areas of concern were long-standing: the staffing issue, the capacity issues—and not only the capacity issues in long-term care, but also in hospitals. We have an integrated approach now with hospitals, with the IPAC teams there.

This is an incredibly important aspect—to understand how we work together to create a more robust support for our long-term-care homes, as we have more understanding of the virus, how it spreads, what measures and tools are evolving and emerging across the world. We've learned from other countries, as well.

Our experts—hundreds of them—we are listening to them: the Chief Medical Officer of Health, our medical officers of health, Public Health Ontario.

We will continue to listen to our sector, hear the concerns and respond in an active way, which is exactly what we've been doing.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Joel Harden: Families in Ottawa have lined up since before dawn to try to get a COVID-19 test, which has been hard already. But to make matters worse, the province said there needs to be a cap on testing and cut tests by 1,200 a day.

A memo sent by officials says, "The provincial lab system is not able to keep up with the significant volumes over the past few weeks." The memo goes on to say, "The province has made it clear that, until the lab system is able to adequately increase capacity, there needs to be a pause on any additional capacity added to testing; with temporary reductions needed for some areas."

Speaker, to the Premier: Which 1,200 parents and children, Premier, should go home without a test to meet this new cap you're imposing about who gets and doesn't get health care in Ottawa?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I want to be clear that the memo referred to in the media and by the member here was not reviewed or approved by me. I have been unequivocal since the beginning that there are no caps or limits on testing that is to be allowed. This is something that is being reviewed, and there is going to be clarification that is going to be issued by Ontario Health after it has been reviewed by my office.

We've said from the outset of this pandemic that everyone who needs a test must be able to have access to a test, and that has not changed. But we did indicate last week that because of the vast number of people who are coming forward for testing, despite the fact that we've included and increased our lab processing capabilities to over 40,000 tests per day—we still need to make sure that those people who must be tested, who need to go back to work, who are asymptomatic but are working with long-term-care patients, for example, must be given priority. But the fact of the matter is that anyone who needs a test will still get a test.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Joel Harden: The minister just told us that there are no caps, but that's not addressing the frustration in Ottawa at the actual labs that have been backlogged for days.

Melissa Coenraad is a laboratory technician at the medical laboratory EORLA site. She says her lab has been backlogged by thousands of tests. It's no wonder that local officials are now saying that because of the lab backlogs, there need to be caps on testing. The Premier and his minister should stop blaming the labs and the front-line health care workers like Melissa who are doing their utmost to test everyone they can.

Extending testing hours at Moodie Drive assessment centre has been put on hold, and a second pop-up testing centre in Orléans was scrapped because of concerns about capacity.

Why has this government bungled testing and lab capacity so poorly that memos like this are even being sent out in the first place?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, in actual fact, what is happening is, we are boosting both the testing capacity and the lab capacity significantly. That is part of our fall preparedness plan. We knew that there would be more people coming in to be tested because of concerns with flu season coming up, as well as people knowing that there's an increase in COVID-19 testing and they want to be tested too. So we are boosting both of those. We are putting \$1 billion—\$1 billion—into increasing our ability to test, to conduct the lab analysis and to do the case management afterwards. So all three of those have been boosted significantly—remembering, in fact, that we started at the beginning with 5,000 tests being able to be done per day. We're now at 40,000 tests being done today, and we're working to increase that to over 50,000 tests per day. That is part of our fall plan. That is what we have planned for, that is what we've allocated money for and that's what we're implementing.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is to the Premier. Premier, as you and the Minister of Health noted yesterday, the numbers were deeply concerning. As our health officials have been telling us, Ontario is now in the second wave of COVID-19. We know that this wave will be more complicated, more complex. It will be worse than the first wave we faced earlier this year. As you indicated, there are two steps that everyone should take: Download the COVID alert app, and get a flu shot this fall.

But our government is taking additional measures to help strengthen our health care system. It means adding more resources, adding more testing capacity, and, most importantly, adding more boots on the ground; as we enter the second wave, getting more health care workers, more nurses and more personal support workers.

Premier, what is our government doing to bring additional resources as part of our fall preparedness plan?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the great member from Markham–Unionville—the second highest votes in the entire province. Congratulations.

Together, our collective actions will decide whether this is a wave or a tsunami, as I mentioned yesterday. We've already taken countless steps to reduce the gatherings,

restrict gatherings and address hot spots across the province. That's why, as I said earlier, we're investing \$283.7 million on the backlog of surgeries and we put \$1 billion into testing and tracing. We have the largest flu immunization program ever seen in the entire country. That's 5.1 million flu shots, which I encourage each and every one of us to go out there and get. We're adding 800 more nurses; in total, 3,700 more health care workers—800 more nurses, 600 more acute care nurses in hospitals and long-term-care homes, and over 2,000 more PSWs. I love the PSWs. Great news coming on Thursday for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Billy Pang: My supplemental question is to the Premier again. Premier, I want to echo your comments about the amazing work that our personal support workers do in the province. I want to take this opportunity to thank many of my constituents who are PSWs who have stepped up and sacrificed during this time.

I am particularly proud of our government's announcement of additional funding of \$14 million to the personal support worker training fund to continue training more PSWs for long-term-care homes and community care. This significant investment will allow us to recruit, retain and quickly deploy our essential health workers to where they are needed most and ensure that our health care system is prepared to deal with any outbreaks or surges in cases.

Can the Premier please share with this Legislature what other measures we have announced to get more boots on the ground to prepare for the fall?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I want to thank the MPP from Markham–Unionville. We're sending out a call to the entire province for people to join the team. Out of the 3,700 people—we need people. No matter if you're going to college or university, think about a career choice. A career choice would be great, to step up to the plate and help our province out when we need you most.

As part of our \$52-million investment, \$26 million is earmarked for personal support workers and supportive care workers, and \$26 million to support the nurses. We're out there; we're asking the people of Ontario to please step up.

I've got to give a shout-out to all the great volunteers that go into long-term-care homes to see their loved ones. Not only do they take care of their loved ones to take the load off the PSWs, but they take care of other patients within that long-term care. So I just want to give a shout-out to all the great family members who go into long-term care to help out the PSWs.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. This question is for the Premier. Every day in this chamber we've been asking the government to reduce class sizes so our children and staff can be properly distanced in our schools. I want to save the Premier some time here: We know what the minister and the Premier have said over and over again, and

it's the same plan that isn't working and that they've been talking about since the summer. The point is that plan, again, is not working. Ontario parents have lost confidence, our cases are rising, so it's not good enough.

The Premier says they're listening to the voices of experts, but public health officials, hospitals—including SickKids—epidemiologists and experts have all said that smaller classes with more distance must be a priority.

Why then, Mr. Speaker, are most classes in most boards just as crowded as they were before COVID-19? Who told this government not to adopt the advice of those experts?

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We are following the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of this province, the foremost medical expert of the province, who has given us advice on how to mitigate the spread and ultimately improve the safety of all schools. It's why we unveiled a plan that is funded with \$1.3 billion in allocation, the largest investment in this country, to ensure our schools are safe. It's the basis for why school boards have now been able to hire well over 2,000 educators. It's the basis for why we have an additional 1,100 custodians, and that excludes some of the largest school boards, as that data gets to the ministry.

What we have seen is actions and layers of prevention taking place in local school boards to reduce the risk. Mr. Speaker, we are grateful for the work of our educators, for the work of our public health, for the work of our nurses and doctors in every school and every community of this province who are doing their very best to deal with this unprecedented pandemic. We are grateful for their leadership. We'll continue to be there for our schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

Ms. Marit Stiles: The Premier and the minister just keep returning to those same speaking points over and over, but the truth is that the dollars are not flowing. The government says they have a "rainy day fund." Well, the rainy day is here. It's now. Having 30 grade 5s in a portable is not acceptable to anyone else in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the government and others watching that this is the same government and the same cabinet that tried to increase class sizes to an average of 28 kids per class just months ago. This is the same government that wanted to cut 10,000 teachers and other education workers. And despite overwhelming evidence, despite surging cases, they still cannot bring themselves to do what needs to be done.

So again, Mr. Speaker, why won't the government deliver the one layer of protection that matters most: safely distanced smaller classes?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We accept that it is an unprecedented challenge—a rainy day, if you will, as used by the member opposite. It is curious, Speaker, that just weeks ago, when a proposal came from school boards to allot \$496 million of reserves, those members philosophically

and fundamentally opposed it, again, just like they opposed online learning during the negotiations, just like they opposed online learning in the fall.

Speaker, consistency is a strength. What parents want is to know that their Parliament is working very hard to ensure the quality of learning is consistent province-wide and is safe. That is exactly what this Premier is doing in every region of this province, reducing classroom sizes, improving safety and ensuring quality of learning, online and in class.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Premier. Speaker, I think we all understand the economic imperatives that have governed the reopening of our communities, and we all understand that people are longing to get back to the activities that they love with their friends and their families. But, Mr. Speaker, at this moment, as we see the weaknesses in the reopening plan, as we hear health officials advising us to pull back and introduce new restrictions in restaurants and bars, as we hear the Ontario Hospital Association advising that in some regions we would be best to return to stage 2 in order to possibly continue to keep schools open, why is it that the government considers it necessary to allow casinos to open?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I appreciate the question from the former Premier. We do listen to the Chief Medical Officer of Health. That's who I listen to. That's who the team listens to. And it's not just about the Chief Medical Officer of Health; they have health experts who sit around the health table and not only advise us, but advise the chief medical officer. I'll continue to listen to the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

They seemed to do one heck of a great job getting us to the point we are. I was looking at the map the other day, Mr. Speaker. Next to Illinois and any region our size in all of North America, we're testing more people than any of them. We're actually hammering on with over 40,000 tests. We're going to still be vigilant, and we won't take our eye off the ball for a second, but I do appreciate the question from the former Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the complexity of what the Premier is up against right now. I was actually thinking last night what I would do if I were in his shoes. Mr. Speaker, it does occur to me that comparison with the United States is not the comparison that I would look to. I would actually look to some of those countries in other parts of the world. I would look to Scandinavian countries. I would look to what is happening in other parts of the world to inform what we're doing, and I would listen, as he says he is, to all of the health officials in Ontario.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Education doesn't seem to listen to front-line teachers, doesn't seem to listen to educators. And now we've got the Ontario Hospital Association putting out advice that doesn't seem to be resonating with the government.

What the OHA is saying is, they're warning that if the government does not move back to stage 2 in the regions of the province with the highest case counts, namely the GTA and Ottawa, hospitals could become overwhelmed with patients. Was the government aware that the OHA was going to make this recommendation, and if not, why not? Now that the recommendation has been made, will the government follow the advice of these health officials?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, I did speak to Anthony Dale—I think it was yesterday, I believe—and got his advice. Again, I appreciate the advice, and I take their advice a lot of times, but I pass that on to the Chief Medical Officer of Health. That is who I'm going to listen to. I'm going to listen to the chief medical officer, the deputy chief medical officer and the health team. That's what I'm going to have to do, and I know the former Premier would do the exact same thing. She understands the pressures of this job. You know something? I could never get upset with the former Premier, because she's walked a mile in my shoes. She understands it.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M. Sam Oosterhoff: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Affaires francophones.

Vendredi dernier était le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Ce jour marquait la fin d'une semaine importante alors que le gouvernement annonçait plusieurs mesures et investissements répondant à des demandes de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario.

Pouvez-vous, madame la Ministre, nous préciser quelles actions ont été prises pour continuer de soutenir la communauté francophone?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: J'aimerais remercier mon collègue pour sa question, mais aussi pour tout son travail et son soutien concernant les enjeux importants pour la francophonie ontarienne en tant qu'adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation.

La semaine dernière, nous avons célébré le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. La semaine a très bien commencé avec l'adoption d'un projet de loi, le projet de loi 182, qui a reconnu le drapeau franco-ontarien comme symbole officiel de la province de l'Ontario.

Nous sommes ensuite allés de l'avant avec un investissement de 500 000 \$ dans un réseau économique francophone et une campagne de promotion pour les entreprises franco-ontariennes.

Finalement, pour culminer la semaine, j'ai participé au lever du drapeau virtuel de l'AFO et j'ai annoncé qu'il sera désormais possible d'avoir des caractères de langue française, dont les accents, sur les permis de conduire et les cartes-photo de l'Ontario.

Nous continuons toujours le travail, monsieur le Président. Je suis en consultation constante avec les représentants de la communauté franco-ontarienne pour m'assurer que le gouvernement réponde très bien aux enjeux—

Le Président (L'hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. The supplementary question.

M. Sam Oosterhoff: Merci, madame la Ministre, pour votre réponse. Comme vous l'avez mentionné, notre gouvernement a annoncé l'ajout des caractères français, dont les accents, sur les permis de conduire et cartes-photo de l'Ontario la semaine dernière. J'étais très heureux de voir cette annonce avec vous et l'adjointe parlementaire.

Pouvez-vous s'il vous plaît expliquer l'importance de cette mesure à nos collègues ci-présents?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie encore une fois mon collègue pour sa question.

Depuis que nous sommes au gouvernement, nous entendons la communauté et les intervenants demander que cet ajustement soit fait. Entre novembre 2019 et septembre 2020, 13 pétitions ont été déposées à cette Assemblée à ce sujet. Clairement, la communauté francophone le réclamait depuis très longtemps. Je suis très fière que notre gouvernement ait pu livrer cette réalisation concrète pour les Franco-Ontariens, alors que l'ancien gouvernement n'a pas pu le faire pendant ses 15 ans au pouvoir. De décrire, comme j'ai entendu par certains membres de l'opposition, cette mesure comme de petits bonbons démontre un manque de compréhension des enjeux franco-ontariens par les membres de l'opposition.

L'AFO affirme que c'est une demande qui perdure depuis les années 1980. Et depuis hier, les francophones peuvent se rendre aux bureaux de ServiceOntario pour demander un changement à leur nom sur les permis de conduire. Les Dubé, les Côté, les Gélinas de cette province auront enfin leur nom écrit correctement sur leur permis de conduire et leur carte-photo.

1100

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. The Riverside, Bloorcourt and Queen Street West BIAs represent over 600 businesses here in Toronto. They wrote an urgent letter asking for clarity around directives, financial support and relief from predatory insurance rates. When the Premier suddenly announced on Friday that they must reduce their hours of operation, they were blindsided.

As the Premier lurches from one crisis to another, why would he not at the very least demonstrate some kind of respect for businesses who have been complying with public health directives instead of penalizing them for just trying to stay in business? At the very least, will this government try to help them survive with direct financial supports to ensure that they remain solvent? After all, it's not their fault that this Premier did not plan for COVID-19.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, we've been there every step of the way. You know something? My heart breaks for the restaurant owners.

By the way, I've just got to tell the opposition, you can't have it both ways. You can't in one question say close down everything and listen to the OHA, the Ontario Hospital Association, and then the next question is, why

did you close down the bars and the restaurants an hour early? You can't have it both ways.

But, again, through the advice of the chief medical officer, yes, we reduced the hours at restaurants and bars, to close at 12 o'clock. But they can have last call at 11 o'clock. So you know something? I think it was very modest that we asked the bars to close down and not stay open until 3 o'clock in the morning. We also closed the strip joints, as well, because the transmission was 500 people versus 130 people at a restaurant.

I support the restaurant folks there. We're going to come up with a plan with the federal government to support all the restaurants right across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And the supplementary question?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This Premier has been inconsistent on the business file. He just banned lap dances in strip joints last Friday, Mr. Speaker. The Premier says he understands how hard it is for our business community, but if he really did, he would be transparent with business owners about policies that will directly affect their bottom lines. Business owners need to know what is coming so that they can plan. The Toronto BIAs ask a good question: Does this government really know what they're doing? Because every move thus far has compromised confidence in our economy.

They have one last request, which we also call for in our Save Main Street plan: Will this government take immediate action to work with the insurance industry to support SMEs by preventing—and these are their words—“astronomical increases to businesses’ insurance policies and premiums”? If you want to be on the side of small businesses, you should have their back on this file.

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you, I just find it so ironic: Every single item that we've put forward over the last two years to reduce taxes by 8.75% on small businesses, reducing WSIB premiums by close to \$2 billion—I can go on and on—the last speaker voted against—every single item that we've put forward to support small businesses. I just find they flip back and forth. I've never put one motion forward for small businesses that they haven't disagreed with. They're anti-business. Make no mistake about it, they're anti-business; they believe in taxing the pants off small businesses. We don't. We believe in supporting small businesses, small family-run businesses, and our policies have shown that. We're going to continue supporting them. But you can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier. After weeks of hearing that the government has a plan for a second wave of COVID-19, after weeks of promises to improve and increase testing capacity in Ottawa, after weeks of seeing those lines for tests in Ottawa get bigger and bigger and bigger, the residents of the nation's capital awoke this morning to the news that the Ontario government has directed testing centres to reduce the number of

tests they perform and to stop the expansion of testing centres like the one on Moodie Drive in Nepean. According to reports, there isn't enough lab capacity to process the tests, Mr. Speaker, and the government has asked for fewer tests to be done. How can Ottawa residents trust a government that promises an increase in tests one day while their officials are issuing secretive directives to scale them back the next?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker, and with your indulgence, I will repeat that we did not know about this memo that was sent out. This was not approved by my office, and this is something that Ontario Health is going to be clarifying with a further memo after they've had discussions with our office.

We have been clear from the very beginning that everyone who needs a test will be given a test. That has not changed and will not change. What we have done is substantially increased our testing volumes to the point that, over several days last week, we were doing over 40,000 tests per day across the province of Ontario. That is a significant increase from what we started from. At the same time, we've been boosting our lab capacity to do the same thing. We are well on track to reach the level of 50,000 tests that we can do within the next very short period of time.

But what we also indicated last week was if you are asymptomatic, you can be tested. If you need to be, if you're working with long-term-care patients or you need to go back to work, you can be tested at pharmacies or at assessment centres. That level of testing is going to continue, and anyone who—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The supplementary question? The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's hard for families waiting or unable to get a test to understand how we find ourselves here when the government had the time and the money. We knew that a second wave was imminent, we knew that two million kids were going back to school, and yet we find ourselves in this situation where we can't build up testing capacity fast enough to meet demand, and there are serious testing backlogs and confusing messaging around who can get a test. It seems to me that the government's priority this summer was the Premier's tour, instead of preparing for a safe return to school or expanding testing and contact tracing or, at the very least, better management of the lab capacity that we do have.

Speaker, it is a flat-footed response. So through you, to the Premier: Why is it that we find ourselves so woefully unprepared for the second wave of COVID-19?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, quite the opposite is the case. We have been prepared for a long period of time for a second wave of COVID-19. We started working on this in the early summer and have been working on it consistently ever since. The result is our plan that we have been indicating to the people of Ontario and as well to the members on the opposite side, which takes into account all

of the relevant factors in dealing with the second wave: the numbers increasing, the flu coming on at the same time as a potential second wave, the increase in the number of test volumes that we need to do, dealing with the fact that so many residents have been decanted from long-term-care homes into hospitals for infection prevention and control, and working on the backlogs of surgeries and procedures that were postponed during wave 1. All of these things have been taken into consideration, have been planned for, and are being implemented not only with the plan, but with a significant infusion of cash, including \$1 billion to supplement and implement our testing, tracing and isolation policy—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The next question.

COVID-19 RESPONSE IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. This COVID period has been such a challenge for all of us, but especially for our small businesses and particularly northern small businesses that have been hit hard during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we commend those businesses that have been able to adapt and overcome these unprecedented challenges of the past seven months, can the minister please tell us what our government is doing to support our northern small businesses?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Brantford–Brant for his important question. Yesterday, I stood shoulder to shoulder with my Progressive Conservative northern colleagues to announce the Northern Ontario Recovery Program. This is a targeted investment, an allocation of \$20 million. It provides up to \$25,000 in grants for small businesses across northern Ontario to adapt to the changing circumstances that COVID has, from its outset, presented to small businesses.

We're very proud of this announcement. We thank the chambers of commerce and we thank businesses for the extensive stakeholder engagement that we made over the course of the summer. We're pleased to offer this program effective October 1, backdating to March 24, 2020, for the real changes and adaptations that businesses made and will continue to make in the face of COVID. Charla Robinson from the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce greatly appreciated the support offered by the program, especially for those businesses in retail, tourism and restaurants. We're proud to support northern Ontario businesses.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you, Minister, for that response, and back to you: It's clear that our government is listening to the people of northern Ontario and responding to their unique needs. Can the minister please share more details of the program and the types of projects that it aims to support?

Hon. Greg Rickford: This is a comprehensive plan that we received feedback on from businesses across northern Ontario. Some of the things that we were thinking about were building renovations to support physical distancing and proposing to municipalities a better shopping and dining street in their towns—many of them are small towns. We tried that out in Kenora and we found out that small businesses needed new furniture and new appliances to make that work.

Tourist camp operators are going to need larger docks, in an effort to keep tourist parties separate. There are equipment purchases, including PPE, and marketing and technology platforms, especially for retail, potentially meeting a new market.

The value proposition, we believe, goes beyond COVID. These fixes and these adjustments that have been done and will continue to be done were certainly related to COVID, but at the end it's a business enhancement. A better technology platform and a marketing initiative are good for northern Ontario business. That's what we heard from over 400 people who attended the Zoom announcement yesterday.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre des Soins de longue durée.

Last week in response to my question about personal protective equipment, the minister stated, "We need to deal with the facts, and the fact is that our long-term-care homes in Ontario are receiving the PPE they need. They have the PPE they require, including N95s."

Minister, you've seen the letter dated September 22 from the chair of St. Joseph's Villa and Villa St. Gabriel. They wrote:

"Since the onset of the pandemic both of our 128-bed long-term-care homes have been desperately trying to acquire N95 masks for our facilities with no success.

"We have contacted the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of LTC pleading for their assistance to secure these masks for our facilities."

Minister, how can you explain the disconnect between your statement in this House and the fact that long-term-care homes still cannot access the PPE they need to keep their staff and residents safe?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. It is a very important question, because our government has been committed to the safety and well-being of residents and staff during wave 1 and as we continue to plan into wave 2.

PPE is an absolute essential. Our homes are receiving PPE supplies, including N95s. But there is a difference between the homes that are in outbreak needing N95s, versus homes that are not in outbreak. We want to make sure the homes that are in outbreak are receiving the N95s they need. We are endeavouring to make sure that every home in Ontario, every long-term-care home, has the PPE supply that it needs, whether it's N95s, whether it's

gloves, gowns, surgical masks or face shields. We are making sure that they have what is needed.

There will be more this week on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, we are currently in the second wave. Six months since the declaration of the pandemic, and our long-term-care homes still cannot get the PPE they need from this government.

The government policy to wait until the home is in outbreak to release N95s completely ignores the basic principles of infection control. Long-term-care homes require an inventory of PPE on hand to ensure they are ready. Long-term-care homes cannot wait until they are in outbreak to be rationed N95s from Ontario Health or the LHINs or the Northern Supply Chain or the back of the Premier's truck. They need to be ready, and that means they need an inventory on-site.

Can the minister please advise the House when she expects every Ontario long-term-care home, including St. Joseph's Villa and Villa St. Gabriel in my riding, will have the needed inventory of PPE, including N95s and P100s, on-hand?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again. I refute the assertion that the homes do not have the PPE supply that they need. It is absolutely accurate to state that the homes have the PPE that they need at this time. Given the previous procurement problems, the global competition and the problems associated with that, we were making sure that PPE supplies got to the homes, so that homes were not left without because more PPE supply went to another. We had to be fair and distribute the PPE that we had.

Now, the procurement process is much better. Ontario has its ability to be independent in its supply of masks, N95s and other aspects. That is a significant change. I'm going to tell you that imminently you will be hearing about the advance supply that our homes across Ontario will have. I thank you for raising the question.

CONCUSSIONS

Mr. Stan Cho: My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. Rowan Stringer was a 17-year-old varsity rugby player in Ottawa. She passed away after sustaining multiple concussions, resulting in catastrophic brain injury. Through you, Speaker: Minister, the legacy of Rowan Stringer lives on through Rowan's Law, something you fought for alongside Rowan's parents, Kathleen and Gordon Stringer, during your time in opposition. Rowan's Law ensures that Ontario's athletes are protected and treated as soon as there is a suspicion of a concussion, a measure that will undoubtedly save lives; however, it is the country's first and only concussion legislation.

Through you, Speaker: Minister, concussions are a concern for almost all sports. What is the ministry doing to spread the word on the importance of concussion legislation, so other regions across the country can do their part and protect their athletes?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to say thank you to the member from Willowdale for his question, and also for his advocacy. It was a year ago when he and the member from Barrie–Innisfil and the member from Durham all helped me kick off Rowan's Law Day, my first as the minister here. I would also be remiss if I did not say thank you to the members from Waterloo and Ottawa South for their unwavering support and commitment to Rowan's Law; we truly made a really formidable team in the true sense of the word. I couldn't be more pleased to be here today as minister responsible, but also the originator of this legislation.

Last Friday, we were at Rowan's Pitch to announce that Ontario will lead a national discussion at the next federal-provincial-territorial meeting of sports ministers, and we'll continue to have that conversation. Today, Minister Walker is in his constituency announcing \$25,000 to help with rural concussions with the brain resource centre in his community.

We are working tomorrow with the Rowan's Law working group and my amateur sport panel to bring everyone together to have a broader discussion on concussion and the effects on mental health with the minister. Tomorrow we're going to have a great announcement. We're looking forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The supplementary question.

Mr. Stan Cho: Speaker, through you: Minister, thank you for everything that you've done to have Rowan's legacy live on, not only in Ontario, but in our entire country.

Speaker, concussions can happen to anyone taking part in sport and recreation, and sometimes they can have very serious consequences. The highest rates of concussion in Ontario, in fact, are found among children and youth under the age of 18. That's why it's so important to ensure that concussions are diagnosed and treated correctly.

Speaker, through you: Minister, can you speak to some of Ontario's activities to date that have helped bring awareness to Canada's first concussion safety legislation?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I thank the member for that supplemental. Obviously, it's important that as we look at what a safe return to play looks like in a COVID-19 environment, we learn the lessons that we did from our discussions in this province with respect to concussion awareness. We are going to continue to build on that, as I said, with the Associate Minister of Mental Health later tomorrow.

Since Rowan's Law was committed to by this Legislature and through the previous ministries, we have invested \$130,000 into the Canadian Concussion Legacy Foundation, over \$35,000 to Coaches Ontario, over \$600,000 into the development of concussion awareness resources and templates, and over \$25,000 to support Special Olympians.

Speaker, this is a very important issue. A young brain cannot be covered with a cast. It does have long-standing effects long after life—and as we saw with little Ro, after

sustaining multiple concussions, she fatally met a circumstance that her parents will probably never get over. Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to address this.

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Premier. Small and medium-sized businesses are relying on the government to keep them afloat during the pandemic. This is especially true in the arts and culture sector, where women face historic barriers and a disproportionate negative impact from the required shutdowns in our communities.

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Tammy Lawrence, a successful business owner in Kitchener Centre, lost her live performance venue, Rhapsody Barrel Bar, during the pandemic. Tammy explained that she couldn't afford any more debt, and four months of rent relief just wasn't enough to save her business. Like many business owners, COVID-19 took her business out. She lost her livelihood, musicians who graced the Rhapsody stage lost their income, and the community at large has now lost a cultural gem.

With the second wave upon us, businesses like hers are still struggling. My question is to the Premier: Will this government help businesses like Rhapsody avoid closure through tangible supports, like emergency commercial rent subsidies, freezing utility bills and banning all evictions during the entire duration of this pandemic?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you to the member opposite for that question. It's a very important question. So many people within the sectors that I represent are women, and they have been hit hardest first, of course, in this pandemic. As my colleagues I think are probably tired of hearing me say, we will be the longest to recover, which is why in our sectors I immediately created 14 ministerial advisory committees in order to address the various parts of this ministry and what the economic impact would be.

We believe we've lost about \$20 billion in the first phase of this pandemic, and that's why it's extremely important to act on these recommendations. I've been pleased to work with the cultural sector, in addition to investing \$7 million into the music investment fund in the province of Ontario. Yesterday, we had another additional investment of \$1.3 million to support the cultural sectors. We're going to continue to roll out this funding. We believe that these cultural sectors are going to be incredibly important to the economic recovery and the social recovery of this province in the next 18 months.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the Premier: We are in the midst of a "she-cession." More women than men are losing jobs. In my riding of Kitchener Centre, we are

seeing successful businesses owned and operated by women closing because of the pressures of COVID-19.

Another successful live performance venue, the Causerie, run by Stephanie Rozek and C.J. Perez, female business owners in my riding, also had to close their doors, and this is no coincidence. Three strong women running cultural hubs in Waterloo region have been forced to close their doors. Women have a long history of glass ceilings and financial barriers when it comes to succeeding in the business world. Stephanie told my office that she took out extensive personal debt to underwrite the business and was at the point of just being able to start her repayments when the space was forced to close because of COVID-19. With the right support, this could have been prevented.

Again, I ask the Premier if he can guarantee that, as the second wave is upon us, business owners who are faced with historic barriers will have the proper support that they need to keep their doors open.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks for another excellent question. We're all seeing it in each one of our communities, which is why I think it's really important that we look at the cultural fabric that these institutions bring to our communities, including the businesses, as well as the importance that they have in terms of our economy. I think we're seeing that fragility now.

I want to assure the member opposite I am working with the associate minister of women's issues to see how we can best address this within the sectors that I represent. In particular, I want to talk about music venues, which you talked about, and cultural venues. We know it's going to be very difficult, not only that if we open them—getting people back and comfortable getting back into that circumstance and the consumer behaviours and habits. It's what keeps me up at night, but I assure you it gets me up in the morning, working with these sectors.

I would invite the member opposite and her constituents to participate on Friday with the telephone town hall with the ministry and myself, as we can talk through and navigate these tough waters together. But I am very grateful that she brought this important issue to the floor of the assembly, because we are dealing with a triple threat: a health care threat—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The next question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. With the rollout of our government's forest sector strategy and the recent passage of the 100th anniversary of forest week, people are keen to hear what concrete steps our government is taking to support forestry in this province.

I know that the strategy is comprehensive and is built around four pillars: promoting stewardship and sustainability, putting more wood to work, improving cost-competitiveness, and fostering innovations, markets and talents.

Minister, for many years, the previous government paid only lip service for support for rural and northern Ontario industries like forestry. But we Conservatives are different: We deliver. Could the minister please tell us how we are acting on the principles laid out in this strategy?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thanks to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for that great question. Our government is all about improving the conditions on the ground so that Ontarians can create jobs and innovate.

Last week, along with my colleagues Ministers Hardeman and Fedeli and my parliamentary assistant, Mike Harris, I was proud to announce we are providing \$2 million of investment into wood products company Oxford Pallet. With this funding, they'll be able to expand their operations, introduce innovative robotic and vision equipment to boost productivity and create local jobs. Investments like these are absolutely critical to support the province's vital forestry sector and start us down the road to a strong economic recovery.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary, Speaker, but what a great business Oxford Pallet is—unbelievable people. I'll tell you more in the supplementary

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Minister, for that response. It is so good to see that only a few weeks after the rollout of the strategy we are taking concrete action to implement it and create jobs and prosperity in this province.

I understand that Oxford Pallet is the first company to be approved for funding under the Forest Sector Investment and Innovation Program, a program designed to help Ontario forestry companies develop and implement innovative technology. It's important to be innovative from the perspective of business competitiveness and job creation, but equally important is the role of innovation on sustainability.

Minister, do investments like these just improve the bottom line or do they improve the sustainability of the forest industry as well?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the member for that follow-up question. As I said, at Oxford Pallet, this investment will create 20 new jobs, continue to provide the 60 jobs that they currently have, double their production, as well as increase the amount of Ontario lumber used by 30%, as a result of this investment.

I want to tell you a little more about the people. Henk Vrugteveen and his family are salt of the earth. I'm going to tell you, we had a tour of that plant and he knew every one of those employees by name, and you could understand and see the commitment they had to that job and that company. It's like one big family affair. Those are the kinds of businesses in this province that our government wants to support. They'll be around for a long time. They care about their employees, they care about this province, and they want to help us put Ontario back on that road to recovery.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: On Sunday, the French language school La Mosaïque in my riding sent a letter to parents saying that one whole class was going to be shut down until October 5 because of COVID. Of course, they're not the only parents to get a letter from their school saying that their kids had to stay away. Yesterday, my colleague the member for Davenport noted many other cases.

Your education minister told this House that all was being looked after. He told reporters yesterday that he would do whatever it takes to keep our children safe and our schools open, and he said the same on August 26, September 9, September 21 etc., yet he won't cap class sizes at 15, a key step to reducing risk in our schools.

Premier, how many schools have to shut down before you do whatever it takes and cap class sizes at 15 to protect our children and our families from COVID?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we've been clear, as has the Chief Medical Officer of Health, that the risk within our communities will create challenges within our schools. It's the basis for why the Minister of Health, the Deputy Premier and the Premier of this province have unveiled a significant investment in public health to reduce transmission in the community, to increase immunization to more students—700,000 more people being able access the flu vaccine—expanding testing and expanding contact tracing within our schools, specifically.

We've ensured every layer of prevention is in place. Additional teachers are hired to increase distancing, additional custodians to enhance cleaning and more public health nurses to administer screening and symptom relief. In fact, we've more than doubled public health nurses in schools. And in every school board we're seeing net reductions in classroom sizes. It's a demonstration that our investments are reaching our front lines, and we are grateful for everyone working with us in this unprecedented challenge to reduce the risk and keep our kids safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: You know it's not working, right? It's just not working. It's not just that the students at La Mosaïque have to stay home and deal with the virus, it's not just that their parents have to stay home and look after them and lose work, it's not just that teachers and education workers will have to stay home from their work; it's also the case that the children should be tested and the parents and the children have to go through the ordeal of waiting to get a test.

Our local testing facility is at Michael Garron Hospital, and testing can take hours and hours of waiting to get. As one parent wrote to me, who had been in a line with her child for five hours, "Do you know what it's like to wait in a line like that with young kids? I saw so many parents in tears in that line, stressed to the max, overwhelmed by all of this."

I ask again, Premier, how many schools have to shut down before you actually do whatever it takes to protect parents and children?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, we have committed ourselves to follow a health and safety protocol that has been informed and endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We've put in place a variety of layers of prevention to mitigate risk.

What I can tell you is that the Chief Medical Officer of Health is in constant contact with our public health units.

Just this morning, we had another call with leaders in Windsor-Essex, to talk to our school boards, our public health leaders and the head of nursing, to ensure that the protocols being benchmarked, that are being improved over time—that ultimately are working.

What I can tell you, overwhelmingly, is that on the ground the outbreak protocols are being well managed. Public health nurses are on-site. In fact, mobile testing is being sent to some schools in this province, according to the public health units.

We're ensuring that the training is in place for our educators so that they know how to respond when these challenges arise.

Speaker, we are fully committed to ensuring that our schools are safe. We have more investments coming that will further ensure the safety of schools and the safety of kids.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1132 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated September 29, 2020, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SCOTTISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE ÉCOSSAIS

Mr. McDonnell moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 208, An Act to proclaim Scottish Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 208, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine écossais.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I made sure I was wearing my tartan mask to show interest in the bill.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I can't vote. I can't vote—just interest.

I'll invite the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to explain his bill briefly.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. Beginning in the 1700s, the Scottish Highland Clearances displaced many of its citizens, forcing them out of their homes with no means to support their families. So they looked to Canada as a start of a new life, settling in various locations across Upper Canada, joining their fellow countrymen who had fought for the crown during the American War of Independence.

Once they established their homes and livelihoods, they immediately set about building schools and educating their children, and helped to establish institutions necessary to build a strong and secure country.

Pride in their culture gives the Scots a strong sense of identity and self-worth, which contributes to their success, and left Upper Canada with firmly rooted Scottish traditions such as highland games and competitions.

St. Andrew's Day is celebrated on November 30 and is Scotland's official national day. Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, enacts that this would be Scottish Heritage Day.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Tammy Wheeley from Hanmer in my riding, for these petitions, called "Time to Care."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents' increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

"Whereas several Ontario coroner's inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels, and the most reputable studies on this topic recommend 4.1 hours of direct care per day;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the LTC Homes Act ... for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Daisy Wai: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas parents must be respected as the most important partner when it comes to their children’s education; and

“Whereas school boards and schools must fully involve parents in important decisions regarding their children and their academic progress; and

“Whereas parents want assurance that their children are safe at school; and

“Whereas parents expect their children to be in class, free from disruption to their learning;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to:

“—recognize the importance of” the roles and rights of the parents to their children “as their ... primary educators;

“—encourage and support parental engagement and participation in our education system;

“—work to ensure Ontario’s education system communicates with parents and guardians; and

“—provide ample opportunity for active engagement, knowledge and decision-making in their children’s education.”

I support this petition and I will sign my name to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Tom Rakovec: This petition is entitled “Time to Care.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas quality care for the 78,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels, and the most reputable studies on this topic recommend 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... to amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I certainly support this, and will be signing my name to it and giving it to the page.

EDUCATION

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas parents must be respected as an important partner when it comes to their children’s education; and

“Whereas school boards and schools must fully involve parents in important decisions regarding their children and their academic progress; and

“Whereas parents want assurance that their children are safe at school; and

“Whereas parents expect their children to be in class, free from disruption to their learning;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to:

“—recognize the importance of parents’ roles and rights as their children’s primary educators;

“—encourage and support parental engagement and participation in our education system;

“—work to ensure Ontario’s education system communicates with parents and guardians; and

“—provide ample opportunity for active engagement, knowledge and decision-making in their children’s education.”

I support this petition and will sign my signature.

EDUCATION FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Aline Rochon from Chelmsford in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Stop Ford’s Education Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford’s new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

“Whereas the changes will mean thousands fewer teachers and education workers and less help for every student;

“Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take at least” two “of their classes online, with as many as 35 students in each course;

“Whereas Ford’s changes will” take away “\$1 billion out of Ontario’s education system by the end of the government’s term; and

“Whereas kids in Ontario deserve more opportunities, not fewer;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Demand that the government halt the cuts to classrooms and invest to strengthen public education in Ontario.”

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the table.

1510

EDUCATION

Mr. Billy Pang: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas parents must be respected as an important partner when it comes to their children’s education; and

“Whereas school boards and schools must fully involve parents in important decisions regarding their children and their academic progress; and

“Whereas parents want assurance that their children are safe at school; and

“Whereas parents expect their children to be in class, free from disruption to their learning;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to:

“—recognize the importance of parents’ roles and rights as their children’s primary educators;

“—encourage and support parental engagement and participation in our education system;

“—work to ensure Ontario’s education system communicates with parents and guardians; and

“—provide ample opportunity for active engagement, knowledge and decision-making in their children’s education.”

I support this petition, and I affix my name to it.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the pandemic pay eligibility needs to be expanded as well as made retroactive to the beginning of the state of emergency; and

“Whereas Premier Ford stated repeatedly that the workers on the front lines have his full support but this is hard to believe given that so many do not qualify; and

“Whereas the list of eligible workers and workplaces should be expanded; and

“Whereas all front-line workers should be properly compensated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To call on the Ford government to expand the \$4-per-hour pandemic pay to include all front-line workers that have put the needs of their community first and make the pay retroactive to the day the state of emergency was declared, so that their sacrifice and hard work to keep us safe is recognized.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to the page to bring to the Clerk.

EDUCATION

Ms. Lindsey Park: It’s a pleasure to read this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas parents must be respected as an important partner when it comes to their children’s education; and

“Whereas school boards and schools must fully involve parents in important decisions regarding their children and their academic progress; and

“Whereas parents want assurance that their children are safe at school; and

“Whereas parents expect their children to be in class, free from disruption to their learning;

“We, the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly to:

“—recognize the importance of parents’ roles and rights as their children’s primary educators;

“—encourage and support parental engagement and participation in our education system;

“—work to ensure Ontario’s education system communicates with parents and guardians; and

“—provide ample opportunity for active engagement, knowledge and decision-making in their children’s education.”

I affix my signature to this petition, and I hand it to the page that is approaching me.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank about 400 people from the riding of Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte. I think this is the Attorney General’s, but they’ve asked me to read it for them. So here it goes:

“Whereas:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act...;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Billy Pang: This is the petition for “Food Day Ontario Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the agri-food industry employs over 2.3 million Canadians and one in eight jobs in the Canadian economy; and

“Whereas the agri-food industry contributes over \$47.7 billion in GDP annually to Ontario’s economy; and

“Whereas Canada’s rich culinary culture is worthy of celebration; and

“Whereas fresh, nutritious, locally grown food is necessary for daily life and for proper health and wellness; and

“Whereas locally grown food is an essential component of Ontario’s agriculture sector; and

“Whereas the Food Day Ontario Act would encourage restaurants and consumers to purchase locally produced ingredients and to support our local suppliers; and

“Whereas Food Day Ontario will unite our communities, create jobs, and boost our economy; and

“Whereas the day will promote culinary sovereignty by emphasizing local food, local producers and local businesses; and

“Whereas an annual Food Day Ontario will recognize the hard work and dedication Ontario’s agriculture sector workers put into providing nutritious and healthy food for so many communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass Bill 163, Food Day Ontario ... Act, 2019.”

I support this initiative and I will affix my signature to it.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier Rachelle Gauthier de Hanmer dans mon comté pour les pétitions. Ça s’appelle « Respectez la communauté francophone. »

À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Considérant que l’*énoncé économique* » de l’automne 2018 « du gouvernement a annoncé l’élimination du Commissariat aux services en français et l’annulation des plans pour l’Université de l’Ontario français; et

« Considérant que ces décisions constituent une trahison de la responsabilité de l’Ontario envers notre communauté francophone;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de demander au gouvernement de maintenir le bureau du commissaire aux services en français », dans son entièreté, « ainsi que son financement et ses pouvoirs, et de maintenir l’engagement de l’Ontario de financer l’Université de l’Ontario français. »

J’appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et l’envoyer à la table des greffiers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Greg Rickford: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50, and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 204, An Act to

amend various Acts respecting municipal elections, to amend the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 and to provide for a temporary residential rent freeze and specified temporary protections for certain commercial tenants;

That, the order of the House referring Bill 204 to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged, and that the bill be ordered for third reading; and

That, when the order for third reading of Bill 204 is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, with 50 minutes allotted to Her Majesty’s government, 50 minutes allotted to Her Majesty’s loyal opposition, and 20 minutes allotted to the independent members as a group; and at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Rickford has moved government notice of motion number 90. Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I look forward to further debate on this motion, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I’ve got to say that I’m a little bit surprised that the government didn’t participate at the first turn when it comes to debating why it is that they’re moving this particular bill by way of this particular time allocation motion, but I’m sure they’re going to speak on subsequent turns. They probably want to hear what we have to say and then will adjust accordingly.

I’m not going to take a lot of time, because I know I’ve got a couple of colleagues who want to speak to this time allocation motion, and generally about Bill 204 as well. I just want to say a couple of things that I think are needed to be said here.

First of all, Bill 204 is a bill—does it go far enough, Mr. Speaker? No, but it goes in the right direction. The job of the opposition, I think, in a case like that, is to say that this is something that at least goes in the right direction so, yes, we should support it. We’ve indicated that to the government in our speeches, that we weren’t trying to hold up this bill, we didn’t have any major issue with what they had done. Our issue is what they didn’t do, and there is a number of things that we thought were important, which my caucus colleagues have spoken to, that weren’t contained in Bill 204. I’m not going to take most of my time to talk about that, because I’m sure that other members of my caucus will speak to what should have been in the bill.

But, needless to say, there’s a couple of things to me that are glaring. In speaking to local businesses in the community of Timmins, which I represent—you are probably getting, Mr. Speaker, the same conversations in your riding, as every member in this House on all sides is getting, and that is, there’s a lot of businesses that are

hurting. Just recently, the government's decision to have a last call for bars at 11 is really devastating to the bar sector in regard to their ability to be able to make enough money to keep their doors open. Now, I'm not going to debate if that was right or wrong. I'm sure there are people on both sides of that issue.

But the issue was that the government did not provide in this legislation or any other legislation the type of thing that bar owners and retailers and restaurants and other businesses need to have in the middle of this pandemic, and that is if they lose their revenue, as is the case with a lot of bar owners going forward with what the decision was last week, there needs to be something in place that protects them from eviction.

The commercial rent eviction in Bill 204 is only extended to the end of October. We are clearly going to be in this pandemic beyond October, so why we cut it off at the end of October, I think, is a bit short-sighted. I think we needed to leave it in place as long as it was needed in order to prevent people from being evicted, because there are some landlords out there that are taking advantage of this situation. If you have a type of rental that you figure, "You know what? I'm going to be able to rent this to somebody else for a higher price, and I can evict the person that's there," and they have a longer lease, there's a temptation to do that in some cases.

I'm not saying every landlord is going to do that, because there are a lot of good landlords out there that are trying to do the right thing. You have some in your riding, I have some in mine, Mr. Speaker, but there are some that will attempt that, and that's why there needed to be some sort of protection inside the legislation to prevent eviction on commercial buildings beyond the end of October.

There's a number of other things that I think we needed to do in order to assist businesses, to stop them from having to close their doors and fold up shop and never come back after this pandemic. We needed to provide them with the type of financial support that's necessary to be able to assist them in being able to survive this pandemic so that when things do turn around, we don't have all of these businesses closing down, because that truly would be a real problem for our economy, a real problem for many Ontario families out there. Because you're talking small businesses, by and large, and not large corporations, as you know well. There are people in our ridings, who live in our ridings, who are just hard-working people trying to make a living.

So I'm a bit surprised that the Conservatives, being the party that professes itself to be the party of small business, hasn't been more aggressive in being able to support the small business sector. In fact, I think the New Democrats have been more in line with trying to support small businesses by doing some of the things we've called for in our Save Main Street plan and others that are far more ambitious and far more bold than what the government has proposed. That's what I want to say about Bill 204.

As for time allocation, and this is really the point I want to make—two or three things: First of all, every time the government uses time allocation and further restricts the

participation of the House and, more importantly, the participation of the media and the participation of the public in the process—and in this case, the government is yet again referring a bill out of second reading and bypassing the committee process—we're not even going to Committee of the Whole, something that nobody in this House, except for you and I, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Wilson—whoever survived Committee of the Whole, I think we did it for 10 or 12 days one week. But, anyway, the point is, it's bypassing that entire process, and that's troubling because committee is where the public has its say.

The government has the right to propose; so does the opposition. Individual members of the House can bring forward legislation that they want to have considered. The government, in the end, controls the agenda of the House and decides which bills will get called when it comes to their bills, or if there's a bill that they're interested in that the opposition has tabled, to either call that bill or rewrite it in their own name and reintroduce it—and fine enough, that's their right to do that.

But when you say, "I'm not going to have committee," it means the public doesn't have its say. I think that's a problem because there are people that support this bill, who would want to come to this committee and talk about how they support what the government is doing. There are other people saying, "Oh, I like what the government is doing, but you're not going far enough," and there are some that are opposed. If we do not give the public the opportunity to have their say in the legislative process, I think it's just a slippery slope and we just get ourselves in an area that, quite frankly, we don't want to go in.

It surprises me that the Conservative government is doing that because they have said all the way through this pandemic that they want to work with the opposition, they want to work with the public, they want to be transparent—and those are all words I agree with. I don't think there's anybody in the province that disagrees with the words the government is using, but their actions are very short of their words.

I think that's the point here. The government has to match in action what they're saying with their words and, in this case, they're not. The public is cut out of this committee process. They're not going to have their say and, just as important, the media doesn't have its opportunity to do the kind of scrutiny and reporting on this legislation and other pieces of legislation that normally they would have, because normally a bill is introduced, it gets a little bit of time at second reading, at least a couple of weeks, the media gets to read it, then they know it's going to committee. The media follows what's going on in committee, what was said by the people who came to depute before committee, what committee members have said, they report about that and it helps inform the public when it comes to their thinking about that particular bill.

When we pull the fifth estate and somewhat limit the ability of the fifth estate, being the media, to do its job, I don't think it's a good thing. In the end, it's a bit of a slippery slope that we're getting into.

Does the government have the right to want to have its bills passed, and should they be passed in the end? Absolutely. The parliamentary system says that the government is the one that calls the order in the House and the government must be able, if they have a majority, to pass their legislation. The opposition is not arguing that for two seconds. But you need to have a process that respects the role of the public, the role of the media, being the fifth estate, and the role of other members of the House, including government members, being able to speak to bills and do the work in committee that has to be done.

Mr. Speaker, you've been in this House as long as I have and you know that a lot of the good work that's done in this House is done in committee. Yes, the second reading and third reading processes are important, but the real work gets done in committee, and, unfortunately, the government is bypassing that.

Now, they're going to say that it's because of the pandemic and that we've got to get this done right away etc. True enough, in the sense that we do want to get this done in a timely manner in regard to the pandemic. But we need to do that with an eye to the right of the public, the right of the media and the right of individual members on both sides of the House, and we need to find a way to balance all that off so that it's done in a timely manner, but that we respect, to a degree, the ability of those people to do what they have to do.

1530

The other thing I want to speak to—I'm not going to go much longer, and I'm sure that will get applause from the other side on that part—is, careful what you sow when you're on the government side. Governments of all stripes—NDP, Conservative, Liberal and now Conservative again—have come to this House and they've changed standing orders or have used standing orders in a way that has allowed them to rush the process of legislating and passing legislation through this House, and have managed to make it so that there is less participation by the public and less participation by members. Each time we do that, whoever it is on the other side of the House, we are setting a condition where the next government coming in says, "Well, you did it to me. Live with what you've done."

One day, some of the Conservative members here will be in opposition. You'll be lucky if you're one of them. Speaker, you and I have survived eight or nine elections, whatever it is. There are very few people that survive—we came in on a sweep. I came in on a sweep in 1990. You didn't, Mr. Speaker. You were coming in on the opposite sweep, at a time when your party, quite frankly, was in a bit of difficulty; you were in third place, and you won your riding fair and square from the work you and your predecessor had done. But most of us come in on a sweep when there's a sweep coming in. I came in on the Bob Rae sweep. There are a number of people that came in on Mr. Ford's sweep.

The thing that we need to recognize is that when the tide goes out—you know, they say when the tide comes in, all the boats will float. When the tide goes out, all the

boats will sink. And that's what happens when the sweep is going the other way: A lot of the new members who came in on the sweep are gone. Some of them will survive—as you have some here who survived the Mike Harris government, when Mr. Harris was voted out of office after his second mandate—and then they have to live in the House as opposition members, living and suffering the things that they did when they were in government when it comes to rule changes and when it comes to how rules were used.

The same thing happened to me back in 1990 to 1995. Our government did some things that I'm not the biggest, most proud of when it came to some standing order changes, but I've got to tell you, we pale as compared to what has happened over the last number of years, not just with this Conservative government but with the Liberals before that, both under the administrations of Premier Wynne and Premier McGuinty, and with Mr. Harris before that and Mr. Eves before that—or in between those two.

So careful how you use the rules, because what you're doing is moving the yardsticks, and when those yardsticks are moved, Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves in a position that every successive government coming in after finds itself in a position to say, "Well, that's been done before. Yes, yes, I can do that too. Yes, that's been done. If they criticize us, we just have to say, 'Hey, look what you did. We're doing the same thing.'" So I think a government has to be somewhat careful how it utilizes the rules, because every time you push the rules further and further away from members having the role that they should have in this House and the public having its say in our process, it gets more difficult as we go along.

Just on the one other point I want to make, I used to argue in the House that never should we use time allocation. Over the years, as any member should, you develop a sense of what you can do and what you can't do, given the democracy we're in. And I understand that the government at times has to use time allocation. I get it. There are times that the opposition is holding up something that is a signature piece of the government, and they need to get it through. They will be tempted to use time allocation, and I can understand the logic. But I think the threshold where you utilize time allocation has gotten very, very low. It's a very, very low threshold, and I think that is a danger.

I would hope that if we're government in the next election and we find ourselves in that position, I sincerely hope we try as much as humanly possible to find a way to find that balance. There will be times we're going to have to use time allocation; I understand that. But it should actually be the exception, not the rule, because a lot of what's on the order paper, Mr. Speaker, as you well know—not everything on the order paper do opposition parties disagree with.

You hear the rhetoric from the government, especially when they first got here a couple of years ago: "Oh, the NDP, they voted with the government." Well, so did the Conservatives. Mr. Speaker, I was in this House along with the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and a whole bunch of other ministers of

the crown today who were here. I think the numbers were: We voted for government legislation 58% of the time; they voted for government legislation 52% of the time. It's pretty similar.

You're not opposed to everything in opposition. It's like a clock: A clock is right at least twice a day. A government will get legislation right, or at least good enough for the opposition to support, and they will vote for it.

But my point here is that there are a number of bills that the government brings forward that the opposition could support. It seems to me that it's a lost opportunity if there is not an attempt by the government to find a way to be able to move things forward through the House in a way that says, "Okay, if you're less opposed to this, can we agree on a little bit less debate? And if you're more opposed to that, let's agree on a little bit more debate, with some sort of understanding about how we're going to go through the committee process."

Mr. Speaker, that's how it worked when I got here, and the House operated for 100-plus years before I got here, and they passed legislation. Their standing orders were much, much different than they are today. Governments didn't have time allocation. There was infinite time on speeches. A member could take the floor and hold the floor for a month if they wanted to. But members very seldom utilized those rules unless it was really important.

I remember Mr. Kormos, the member for Welland-Thorold, holding the floor one night over auto insurance because the Liberal government of the day was going to a new auto insurance system that was going to be no-fault. As a person who litigated court cases that represented accident victims, he felt that was wrong, and so did we as a party. So, yes, he used the rules to his advantage.

But eventually, the Liberal government of the day, that of Mr. Peterson, and the official opposition—being Mr. Rae—came to an agreement about, "All right, we don't like this. Send it out to committee for X number of days. Give us more days; this, that and the other thing." The bill made its way through the House, and rightfully so.

The government is going to say, "Oh, yes, but it's because Mr. Bisson, the House leader, doesn't agree to anything, and Mr. Bisson, the House leader, breaks all his agreements." Phooey. Quite frankly, that gets a little bit long. I don't want to get into the long of it, but I'm sure that the government House leader will, and we'll let him do whatever he does.

But it is to the interest of the opposition, it is to the interest of the public, and it is to the interest of the media and the government that we find a way to ensure that we balance the need of the government to pass its legislation, the public to be consulted, the media to be able to report effectively, and the opposition and government members to do their job.

With that, Mr. Speaker, that's the time that I'm going to use in debate. I'm just going to inform the House, in case there's any surprise, we will be voting against this time allocation motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The honourable member took a lot of my speech, so I will reiterate some of the salient points.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that all sides of the House agree on. They might not necessarily agree with all elements of it, but all sides of the House—the opposition, the Liberals, the Greens and, of course, the government caucus—are all supporting this bill.

Obviously, there is a bit of a time constraint on this bill because this is a program that the federal government extended and requires us to move quickly on ensuring that Ontario businesses can participate in the federal program effectively.

Obviously, there are a couple of other things that we've put in there, but again, there are other measures with respect to a rent freeze and with respect to updating the municipal voters list, a recommendation that came through the Chief Electoral Officer of the province of Ontario and through many of our municipal partners. Again, they are all items that all members are supporting, Speaker.

It is obvious that we want to move quickly on getting this bill passed.

I would suggest to the member opposite that there was a great deal of consideration of this. Many of the members opposite served all summer on the standing committee on finance. If I recall correctly, there were over 800 hours of presentations to the standing committee, there were over 500 witnesses, with respect to how the government should move forward on COVID relief. A lot of this did come up during those standing committee debates, and that's what led to many of our provincial partners asking that the federal government move more quickly and provide additional rent relief for commercial businesses. That's why the federal government moved in the fashion that it has.

1540

It is incumbent upon us to make sure that we pass legislation that allows the province of Ontario, like other jurisdictions across this country, to participate in this program. That's why we want to move quickly. I can't imagine another scenario—I'd like to believe that when the member opposite served in government and they envisioned time allocation that this is the type of thing that they were considering would require the use of time allocation by a government. I can't think of a different time or a different scenario where time allocation would be more appropriate. As the member said, yes, we are in a global health and economic crisis that requires immediate action, and we have done that. This Legislature has worked very quickly when it needed to, and this is just another measure that allows us to do that.

The member spoke about some of the changes, about moving the yardsticks. Look, I'm quite comfortable with the way this government and this caucus has moved the yardsticks on a number of things. We've changed the standing orders, absolutely. What have we done? We've changed the standing orders to allow for more debate in this House. We've changed the standing orders to allow for debate back and forth in this place. We've changed the

standing orders to allow for more questions of the government by the opposition. We've changed the standing orders to allow debate on bills that do come out of committee, something that has not happened in this place before. These are all changes that I'm quite proud of. We changed the standing orders to allow for an additional private members' ballot date so that we could catch up. We changed the standing orders to put the focus on private members' business in a way that has never been done in this place ever before. And I'm quite proud of that, because that is something that this caucus really wanted and fought for. The reason they fought for that was because there are so many good things happening in the ridings of the members of this caucus and, quite frankly, of the members opposite, and for years, governments of all stripes—not just NDP governments or Liberal governments, but previous Conservative governments—did not put the emphasis on private members' business that this Premier has put on making sure that private members' business gets done.

We have come back in the middle of a pandemic. When the federal government had adjourned and was doing Zoom Parliaments, this Parliament sat through into the month of July very, very successfully, and we should all be proud of that. And during a pandemic, when we're announcing and when we're passing so many important things for the people of the province of Ontario—all of us collectively, not just the government; we're all working hard on it. Many of these measures were moved forward with if not the support of the opposition, then the approval from them to move in a quick fashion.

But despite that, we have already passed three private members' bills in this very early session. We've been here two and a half weeks and have passed three private members' bills. So the member opposite can complain about that; I think that's good. I think that is a good part of the standing orders.

I mentioned just last week, Mr. Speaker, it made me very happy to see that applications had closed for the new poet laureate—again, a private member's bill that had languished on the order paper in different Parliaments and was completely ignored. This Parliament, the members in this Legislature, got that done because this Premier said we can no longer ignore private members' business; it has to be a priority of this government. And that's what we're doing. That's why we encoded that into the debates of this Legislature.

Imagine, every day we will focus on one member who has worked very, very hard for weeks to bring something forward, to gain the support of people in their community, and we will focus on that bill. Not only will we focus on that bill, but the entire Legislature will get the opportunity to pass judgment on that bill. I don't think that has ever happened in this place, Mr. Speaker. And that's because of the standing order changes that were supported by the members of this Legislature. So when the member talks about moving the yardsticks, yes, I'm pretty proud of how we've moved the yardsticks to ensure that there's more debate here.

I'm also very excited to hear the honourable member opposite talk about the need for more committee time. I'm seized with that, and I'm going to find a way to make sure that we can do that. I hope that in the coming days, when a motion does come forward to do just that, the honourable member will support me. I suspect that I'll get the support from the honourable member on that.

With respect to how this House operates, the member is quite right: I'm going to say that it is challenging dealing with the members opposite. I am quite often, in House leaders' meetings, able to get agreement from other parties, but it is always a challenge when the House leader opposite—I believe fully that he and the colleagues he brings come there in good faith, but they are unable to conclude discussions on anything. The reason we don't have agreement on how long bills should be debated for, how long they should spend in committee, is because we're unable to ever get an answer back.

But I am comforted to know that over the last number of months, this place has not had to turn people away when it has gone to committees. We've travelled committees on bills, on private member's bills. We travelled committees throughout the province and we didn't turn one single witness away when we did that, Mr. Speaker. We sat at the standing committee on finance, and not one person was turned away. The committee sat until 9:30 on Friday nights for many, many, many weeks. Not one witness was turned away.

We've changed the way committees work in this place so that multiple witnesses can be there and that we don't have to turn people away. For many of the bills that have been sent to committee, the committee process didn't last as long as it could have because the committee was able to get through everybody who had applied to be a witness. I think that is not only good news for the government; it's also good news for the opposition, because none of the people that they bring forward are turned away.

So while others can suggest that somehow the work of this Parliament is unimportant, I think just the opposite. I think members have certainly shown, throughout this pandemic, just how important the work is that they're doing, that they are being listened to, and that this Legislature has finally been changed, and I hope it doesn't stop. We have to continue to find ways for members to take back the power in this place, to incentivize members to do that.

Look, the other day we had our parliamentary assistants answering questions. Why are we doing that? Because this House came into an agreement that we would cohort. But it is also very important that when you cohort, the opposition get the opportunity to seek accountability from a minister, and if that minister is not here, their parliamentary secretary will provide that ministerial accountability. That is very, very important.

So on a whole host of items, we have made incredible progress. When the member talks about breaking agreements—well, look, it is frustrating when agreements are broken. You've heard me talk about this constantly in this place. It is unacceptable that when we come to an agreement, somehow the rules change.

Just last Thursday, we had an agreement, colleagues, that as of Monday we would begin cohorting this place. Why? Because it is important that the Legislature continue to be here to do its work. I don't agree with—and I know the members opposite don't either—a Zoom Parliament. I think members have to be here. They have to be made accountable. The people expect us to be here, but they also want us to do it in a fashion that is safe and that is accountable, and we've made a lot of changes. We've accounted how voting happens in this place to do that.

We came to an agreement with respect to cohorting. A certain number of members would be here on this side; a certain number of members would be there on that side. We would work together, and we went a step further: We shared who our cohort was, so that the members opposite would know which ministers would be here to answer questions, should they want to hold ministers accountable, so that their critics could be here for appropriate debate.

1550

We suggested that when a bill had to be—in an emergency, and if a minister wasn't here, we would provide 48 hours' notice if a minister outside of a cohort had to come here to present the bill so that they would know what that is. We asked for the same courtesy back. Both sides asked for the same courtesy back. If there was a bill that was of such importance that more members wanted to vote than the 14 on their side or the 35 on our side—a number, which I thank them for, is a bit higher for us to accommodate the fact that we, as a group, cannot control what the independents do. But to their credit, the independents, all of them, have been working with us on the cohorting as well. They have agreed to help, to work with us.

The first vote went well. The very next vote? It was broken. On the very next vote, on private members' business—that we were supporting, nonetheless—on a bill that we were supporting, they broke the agreement. So how do you continue to work with an opposition that continuously breaks every single agreement?

This is a party that was invited into negotiations with respect to a number of the items that we were doing in the first wave of COVID from March through to June—unprecedented access to bills before they were introduced in this House, unprecedented ability to help change or modify bills. Bills were modified. All that we asked in return was that the content of those bills would remain private until all members had the opportunity to read it and to have it presented in this House. And what happens? The opposition not only goes to the press on bills, but then starts fundraising on a bill before it was even introduced in this House.

So when the member asks, "Can we trust?" Well, it is very, very hard to trust when every single opportunity is given to make this place work better and it is turned away by the opposition—by the official opposition; I don't want to put the independents in the same boat. Because at no point has the leader of the Green Party, the independent members or the independent Liberals—they have always participated in this, because they understand how important it is that this place continue.

The reason we cohorting in the first place is because we all agree it is important for them to hold the government accountable. So we made that decision: "Let's cohort. Let's keep this place going." We've all seen what Ottawa has become, and I don't think any one of us wants that to happen here. But at the same time, members are coming from across the province, from different health areas. So it is incumbent upon us to try and keep people safe so that we can continue this Parliament and this Legislature, so that we can discuss this Bill 204, so that we can move forward on important family law changes that have to happen because the federal government has made changes and we have to respond to those changes—work that had been done for months by the parliamentary assistant, the member for Durham, with respect to changes to family law and a host of other items. That is work that had to be done, and, presumably, the members of this Legislature want to have a say and comment on those items, and they want to do it from here. They want to do it and they want to vote from here.

It would be easier for us to say, "Well, let's find a different way of doing this. Let's do it via Zoom. Let's close this place down and have a Zoom Parliament." But I don't think that works. It doesn't work for the government, and I know that's not what the members of the opposition want. Now, in certain limited circumstances, can we do it? Sure. That's why we've allowed committees to work via Zoom. But, even then, we have said that the Chair has to be in the room, that a member of the opposition has to be in the room when we are working through committee. So there are instances.

The member for Brampton West, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, served on every single minute of 800 hours of committee throughout the summer—every single minute. And because of that, not one person was turned away—not one person. On every single one of the sectoral studies that we did—

Hon. Greg Rickford: They had a voice.

Hon. Paul Calandra: They had a voice. For the first time in many, many years, they had a voice. I can't think of a more important time for people to have had a voice than during a global, economic and health care crisis. They had a voice in the legislation.

We've seen a number of reports that have been tabled as a result of that work. It would have been easier—you could have had a great excuse, if you were a government, to say, "We don't have time," or "Because of the pandemic, we can't go to pre-budget consultations," but we did just the opposite. We looked at the sectors that were hurting the most, and we brought them in front of the Legislature. We authorized that committee to work for months—throughout June, July and August—despite the fact that the opposition only wanted that study to go on for six weeks. We said, "No, six weeks is not enough." They're still upset that we forced them to work in July and August and into September, but despite that, they did good work. I'm not going to suggest that they didn't do good work. I know the members opposite did extraordinarily good work. They seized on businesses—small, medium

and large enterprises—in their ridings, community groups in their ridings, and they asked them for their opinions. They brought differences of opinion forward in the reports that were tabled in this Legislature. We're hearing in the speeches on Bill 204 many of the things that they heard during committee. That's why we're able to move forward, I would suggest, with Bill 204 in the expedited fashion that we are today.

I know all of us hoped that we would have been done with COVID-19 at this point, but we're not. We can sit back and bemoan and be upset by the situation that we find ourselves in—none of us wanted to be in this situation. Before COVID-19 hit, this province was leading Canada and North America in job creation. We were lighting it up. People were coming back to the province of Ontario.

We heard a silly motion from the leader of the Liberals; imagine, the leader of the Liberal Party, who doesn't have a seat in this place. They get limited time to speak. This Legislature was gracious enough to grant them an extra two questions—but very little time to speak. But because of what we've done on improving private members' public business and adding more time for private members' public business, giving an extra slot, the independent Liberals get an opportunity to talk about whatever they want—it could be the pandemic, health care, long-term care, education. And what does the leader of the Liberal Party put on the order paper—and nonetheless, he forces a former education minister. What does he do? He asks for clarification on when the date of the next election will be. It's beyond belief.

As critical as I am of the opposition NDP—and I'm critical because I don't necessarily agree with almost anything they have to say. But at least they fight for what it is they want. I might not agree with much of what comes out of the NDP caucus, but at least they fight for their beliefs. At least they're in this House arguing with me about them. At least they're here talking about what they think are the shortcomings in Bill 204. I can't imagine, as much as I disagree with them—I've got to believe that I would never see a motion from the NDP asking me the date of the next election, given the fact that some of them were here when the fixed election date was passed, so, presumably, they know as well as the Liberals know.

So if there's any big failing here, it is a failing of the leader of the Liberal Party. On his very first test, the very first opportunity that he gets to show any type of leadership, he shows that he is completely not up to the job. That's not a surprise to anybody on both sides of the House, though, I would suggest. Given the mess that the transit and transportation system in this province was left in by the Liberal Party, it does not come as a surprise to anybody that Mr. Del Duca is not up to the job and not ready to lead.

So this is not the first step in us fighting COVID-19. It won't be the last step in fighting COVID because, ultimately, we want to get to where we were before COVID. We want to get to that jurisdiction where all people are coming back to invest, to live, to work and to raise a family. We want this to continue to be the best jurisdiction in the world.

1600

We have done an incredible job, all of us. Our health care system has done an incredible job. Our Minister of Education has done an incredible job of getting two million students back to school. Unlike any other jurisdiction, we have done a great job. The Minister of Health has done an extraordinary job in making sure that people who need to get tested can get tested.

But is the job done? Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. The job won't be done until we can look in the chamber and see that no member is wearing a mask anymore. That's when the job will be done. The job will be done when we have testing, when we have a vaccine and when we can all start to focus on the things that matter to Ontarians. Not that this doesn't matter. This is a priority right now. But people want us to get back as soon as possible to doing what we were doing, putting this province on the road to fiscal sanity and fiscal prosperity, putting the measures in place that would make our education system better.

It's completely unacceptable that the Liberals put a motion forward on the next election date, but they don't want to talk about the system that they left in education, they don't want to talk about the 600 schools they closed, they don't want to talk about math and science scores in the province of Ontario. That's the legacy of the Liberal Party, so I would suggest to them, as opposed to worrying about when the next election date is, they worry about the mess that they left the province of Ontario in.

I know that all of us want to accomplish that. We want to get this province going again in the direction that it was; the best province, where we bring taxes down and continue the reform on health care that the Minister of Health started, which should have started many, many years ago, but did not under the previous Liberal government, and the construction of long-term-care homes, which did not start under the previous Liberal government. Many of the challenges that we face today are a result of the mess that the Liberal government left us in. We said this yesterday: It became even more difficult and it's even more challenging for us to deal with COVID-19 because of the financial mess that was left behind by the previous Liberal government.

When the member opposite talks about why it is that we are upset with the votes that the opposition lent to the previous Liberal government on a number of occasions—they had an opportunity. When the previous Liberal government was in a minority, they had an opportunity to end that government, and they chose to keep them in power longer, Mr. Speaker. But having said that, they're gone. We are here, and we are making the changes that are important to the people of the province of Ontario.

This is a small measure, indeed, Mr. Speaker, but it is an important measure to those people who need our help and support. That is why we are moving forward with this bill. That is why it is important that we move forward quickly—although I can appreciate the members opposite don't approve of the process that is being used to get this bill through—so that we can get support to our small, medium and large enterprises, so that we can get support

as quickly as possible to tenants, so that we can make the changes that are long overdue that have been asked for by the Chief Electoral Officer and by our partners in municipalities across this province.

While they don't approve of the speed at which we need to move, I am glad and I am grateful that they will be supporting the bill, that all members on all sides will be supporting the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to always bring the voices of the people of Waterloo region to this Legislature. I have to tell you, the fact that we are debating time allocation on Bill 204 today surprises many people. I say this, because the House leader made a point, as he often does, of talking about how they are improving things here at Queen's Park.

I will tell you that the process that we went through with the Chair of the finance and economic committee this summer—800 hours. I was on those calls for many of those days of delegations. The member for Brampton West was the Chair, and so he will remember hearing from businesses from across this province. Those people, those businesses came to that committee with the greatest of hope that the government would listen to what they had to say. They came with solutions. They came with personal stories. They brought a lot of emotion to that legislative committee.

The House leader says that they had a voice, but I ask the House leader: How respectful is it to say that everybody had a voice, but you actually weren't listening? Bill 204 does not reflect what we heard. That is why we wanted to get it to committee. That's why we, as the official opposition, wanted to make this a better piece of legislation. We came to this process with the best of intentions. In fact, we spoke to the solutions that those businesses brought to the committee, and those businesses hoped to have a chance to have a voice at committee on Bill 204.

In particular, I think this has really, truly caught people off guard, and I want to thank our House leader for raising the procedural processes that come up in this House, because navigating legislation through Queen's Park should not be a partisan affair. It should truly be, especially in a pandemic, an earnest effort to serve the people of this province.

We got word late last night that Bill 204 had been time-allocated. I want to tell the House leader, right now the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association for the province is meeting. They were meeting because they wanted to have their voices reflected in Bill 204. Are they going to get a chance to do that? No. But I guess the House leader could say, "Well, we listened to those 800 hours of delegations in the summer, and we didn't listen to them either, so the precedent has been set."

But it defies all logic to have solutions before you, to have the minister table a piece of legislation like Bill 204, which is called the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, but it is truly the bare minimum of what we can be

doing. In fact, the number one ask from businesses, as I've said in this House many times, was rent abatement, rent support, direct financial support. Everybody in this House now fully understands what the Ontario BIAA has actually confirmed: They've called CECRA an epic fail. Does Bill 204 correct that? No, it does not. Does it double down on a 70% revenue stream loss to qualify for assistance—which, of course, doesn't help most businesses in the province of Ontario? It does.

So Bill 204 doubles down on a failed policy. Businesses wanted to come to committee; they wanted to plead with the government once again. Perhaps the Chair from Brampton West would once again get the chance to say, "Please unmute yourself" and "Sorry to cut you off," as he did about 575 times this summer—and I do want to thank you for your work, because that was a difficult committee to chair.

But it must be very difficult for the members of the government side to actually see a piece of legislation that is so weak. It is such an abysmal fail. We have to support it. We have to support the bill itself, but we actually have to bring the voices of businesses here to this Legislature, because they were not listened to. And the House leader, in the tone that he takes with us—I don't know why that is, but it's almost like he's giving us permission to do our jobs. I want to tell you, I don't need anybody's permission to do my job in this Legislature. The people of Waterloo sent me here.

The other word that the House leader used in relation to the time allocation is "accountability." This is probably the most overused and misunderstood word in this House. Accountability would be releasing the mandate letters, as the government is now currently fighting in court. That iron ring that the long-term-care minister and the Premier talk about, maybe the iron ring is in the mandate letter, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that's why we can't find it.

So my point to the House leader is that not turning away witnesses throughout the long summer—June, July, August, September—that's great. We were happy to do the work. We truly do think that we could have done it in an expedited manner, because that report is not going to get tabled until October 8. We're at 17 main street businesses lost in Waterloo.

1610

My colleague here from Kitchener Centre raised a question this morning to the Premier of the province and said that these are female entrepreneurs who face systemic barriers as business owners in Ontario and in Waterloo, and the she-cession is real and the she-recovery needs to be part of the solution going forward. We need women to be successful in the province of Ontario. Does Bill 204 address any of that? Of course it doesn't. It's like this was sort of a piece of legislation which was on the edge of somebody's desk and they just pushed it off and said, "We've got to look like we're doing something here." I think the people of this province are worth more effort than that.

We actually have put out a strategy. I hope with all honesty that the minister responsible for economic

development and the finance minister take a good look at our Save Main Street plan because it truly does reflect what we heard this summer. And that is a huge responsibility that we have, Mr. Speaker.

As I mentioned, the BIAs are meeting right now and they raised issues with us on August 24. This is from their deputation when they came to committee. They asked for direct funding to BIAs because the municipal allotment will likely not get down to us. Municipalities are in a whole other ball game. They've asked for desperate support on insurance, and I'm going to read exactly what they said in a few minutes. They've asked about clarity and communication around inconsistencies around closing and reopening, and I did raise that this morning with the Premier. They've asked for direct business support, particularly around rent, OCECRA and the small business liquidity because they have a hard time accessing capital, and they've asked about reducing hard costs and red tape for small businesses.

Just to remind folks though, the Ontario BIAs, there are 300 of them across this province. I've raised the Portuguese; this morning we raised the Queen Street West and the Riverdale BIAs. We are doing our job. We're doing our work. These BIAs represent 110,000 businesses across the province, and they've said that the main-street crisis has been very visual. It's like you can't ignore it because when you go to your home ridings and you drive down Main Street—if we drive down King Street, the closed signs are almost every two or three stores. Some businesses have pivoted, but the larger big-box companies, they've thrived on the loss of those main street businesses. Does Bill 204 address that? No, it does not.

Specifically, though, on the feedback that should be reflected in Bill 204 is the—this is particularly around direct funding. This is from their research that they did around their 110,000 businesses: “Current funding, from all levels of government, is not reaching BIAs and often not their main small businesses. A variety of federal funding channels have been established to help communities and small businesses, but there is an unfortunate lag in distribution and too often funding is failing to reach local organizations and businesses.”

We would fast-track a bill—if Bill 204 had a fast-track mechanism to give direct financial support to businesses, especially as we hit 700 cases yesterday, 554 cases in the province of Ontario today—I have no idea who the Premier is listening to on the rates of infection, but now that our rate of transmission is above 1%, that's an exponential increase in cases. The fact that we are not contact-tracing and testing at appropriate levels means we are missing whole gaps of people who have come into contact with COVID-19. Why do I mention this? Because this is obviously going to negatively impact businesses. They warned of this happening when they came to committee in the summer.

The insurance issue also defies logic. The municipalities and BIAs and small businesses are obviously required to hold specific insurance; however, the requirements and costs are rapidly increasing. At the same time, many

insurance agencies are denying policies, leaving many without the ability to even attain insurance. How can you be open for business in the province of Ontario if you can't get insurance? If you had a part of Bill 204 that brought some fairness to small businesses on the insurance file, we would fast-track that because that is what we've heard needs to happen.

The feedback from businesses is that there have been cost increases, people can't access it, there's an increasing level of insurance required for businesses and patios, and business interruption insurance has not been honoured. Companies that had no claims for years and paid business interruption insurance were denied those payments when the pandemic happened, and their business was interrupted. No level of government has addressed issues around insurance for small businesses. On that front, you're right there with the feds.

The recommendations from the Ontario BIAA are that the government of Ontario conduct a review of insurance companies and consider a capping on insurance premiums or issuing a penalty for companies who either cancel policies or exponentially increase fees. This is a predatory practice that insurance companies are doing right now. There's no denying it. The Premier, when Longo's or one store charged \$37 for some Lysol wipes, went ballistic. He said, “This will not stand in my province.” How can he continue to stand by and let insurance companies put businesses out of business? It makes no sense. Does Bill 204 address that? No, it does not.

They also finally say, “Convene a panel of industry partners to participate.” What a logical option, Mr. Speaker. Let's bring the people who are directly affected by predatory insurance companies to the table. Let's bring that “accountability” word into play.

The other issue that the Ontario BIAA has raised is around inconsistencies in closing and re-opening. They say, “At the beginning of this crisis, our economy was shut down and only ‘deemed’ essential businesses could remain open. This caused frustrating inequities as many large format retailers, such as Walmart, Canadian Tire and Costco remained open because they sold groceries, but non-essential items were readily available, while main street businesses, who have a smaller footprint and therefore more control of access were forced to close.”

This is an important issue, Mr. Speaker, that has been lost on this government. That's why our business strategy plan is called Save Main Street: because it puts a specific lens on the experience of the small business entrepreneur and the challenges and barriers they face. Does Bill 204 address that? No, it does not.

The inconsistencies in closing and re-opening remain a huge issue that we heard across the summer. They go on to say, “While we thank you for working slowly, in determining who should open and who should remain closed during the ‘state of emergency,’ we frequently heard that the announcements provided not enough time for the business to open with correct protocols in place.” This happened in phase 1, but we're actually seeing the pattern happen again in phase 2, with the Premier

arbitrarily saying on Friday that all bars and restaurants can't serve alcohol past a certain time and that hours of operation have been changed.

In fact, one of those restaurants—a favourite of mine, actually—in Kingston, the Toucan, said, “Listen, we installed Plexiglas barriers to protect customers and staff as required.” They take down contact information at the door. They enforce face mask wearing, they sanitize surfaces and hands frequently and they've altered seating arrangements to keep people spaced out. So a business like this is following public health protocols. They are doing their best—in fact, they're going above and beyond, one could argue—to keep people safe in their establishment. They want to be part of the solution. They want to stay in business, because the owner—this is their dream, right? And no consultation, no communication that actually has a two-way street; it's just a directive, and those directives have been inconsistent.

I raise this with you, Mr. Speaker, because inconsistent messaging from any government, at any time, is problematic, but during a pandemic it compromises confidence, and economic confidence in a pandemic matters more than at any other time, I would argue. So the owner says, “Listen, we did all this hiring because we have new safety protocols in place and we needed more staff to be able to do all these things,” and then they find out that the closing at midnight is going to impact 26 shifts per week at the pub.

Now, I want to say something here, because what we heard in the summer is that businesses said, “Listen, we want to be part of the solution. We know that economic recovery will rely on us staying open,” and so businesses like this wanted to come to committee. They wanted to tell you, once again, how important it is to support them to keep people safe.

1620

I do want to say, because the House leader also mentioned education, that near the end of the last two months—I would say August and September—the narrative on what businesses needed changed. It changed primarily around the importance of a safe school opening. That is why we brought the motion to the floor of this Legislature to cap classes at 15, to embed this principle, this concept of social distancing, because businesses also said to us, “Listen, if you don't open schools safely, and there are outbreaks and you don't have the appropriate testing protocols and contact tracing, this will set us back months.” It does seem like we are going in that direction, which is why I asked a question of the Premier this morning on behalf of our caucus: to emphasize that we want to be part of the solution, but direct financial support is needed.

We've actually heard from some businesses across the province that are like, “Okay, shut us down. Shut us down, but help us get through this. Help us stay solvent,” because we know that either the tsunami or the wave or whatever word the Premier is using on whatever particular day, and whatever pillar or plan he's talking about at this particular

moment—we know that whatever is happening over there to date has not been working. It has not been working.

That's why I've raised the disconnect between how we talk about COVID-19 in this place and how the government doesn't answer direct questions around resource allocations in this place. It's so profoundly different than what we are hearing outside of this House. I mean, the businesses in Beaches—East York or Hamilton Mountain or Kitchener Centre or Oshawa need leadership. They need us to be courageous, they need us to be bold and Bill 204 does not do that.

Do you know what Bill 204 primarily does for businesses? It bans evictions for 32 more days. There's no direct commercial support for rent, despite what the Ontario BIAs have asked for and despite what businesses called for across the summer. You're buying businesses 32 days from eviction, but only if their landlord refuses to apply for this failed—epic fail—rent support program.

So you can see—I mean, I hope you can see it and I hope you hear it—that it's completely frustrating to be in this place. I, as a critic for economic development and jobs and international trade and research and innovation—because that's how we roll around here; we have multiple critic portfolios—if you don't hear the frustration, it's because there were solutions right before you. There were solutions that businesses came with to that committee, and then you brought forward a piece of legislation with a nice title saying “help small business,” and then you only bought them 32 days.

So to get this to committee, to make this Legislature effective—I think the House leader would value that process. In order to have that happen, this bill would have to be fixed. I would opt to rewrite it, but I would also be willing to participate in a process to make it a better bill for businesses in Ontario, because those small businesses employ over 80% of the workers in Ontario. If those people aren't working, then they're on some kind of assistance, and that assistance is drying up.

The other piece of this legislation which defies logic, as well, is that it also doesn't ban residential evictions. How can we stay safe as a province in Ontario when people are on the street? Does that make any sense to anybody in this House? No. The Speaker, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, raised the issue where one of his constituents has already received a notice from her landlord saying that rent is going up on December 1, because this bill doesn't stop that from happening.

At the end of the day, you have crafted a piece of legislation with a very strange piece around municipal voters lists, which nobody has any issues with—it could have just gone right through the House—but on keeping people in their homes during a pandemic and keeping businesses open during a pandemic, we have a lot to say about these issues. That initial feeling that we had in those early days of the pandemic, when we really were working together, that feeling gets eaten away at in a crisis when the response to the crisis is the lowest common denominator, Mr. Speaker.

I think I've reflected on some of the things that the Ontario BIAA—who, as I mentioned, is having their

AGM right now, probably discussing how they would try to make Bill 204 a better piece of legislation, but they're not going to get a chance to do that. And so in that manner, we are not honouring our jobs, our responsibilities as legislators.

But I do want to say, the final piece on the rent is that—this is what they say about it, because Bill 204 is tied to a flawed plan: The OCECRA program “has not had the anticipated uptake and as September looms and another wave is anticipated, there is real concern small main street businesses that have been struggling for months will be once again forced to close, and this time with no clear rent relief there is a growing fear they will never reopen.”

So that is what's at stake. That's why this is an important part of the democratic process. As the House leader started his comments by saying, if you have a voice—not denying people a voice at committee or in this Legislature is something to aspire to. But if you are just having them speak but you're not truly listening to them, then you're not being respectful of that process.

On this whole voting business, members who are elected to this Legislature have the right to vote on legislation. It's really a sacred responsibility that we have as legislators, and it's one that some of us feel very strongly about. I don't think that should ever be negotiated away in any House leader's team, and I think that finding some consensus around cohorts is something that our House leader has definitely tried to do in good effort, in the best effort.

Finally, the House leader talked a little bit about this election date, this motion by the Liberals. Listen, we don't have a lot of time for a motion like that. We're very focused on long-term care. We're very focused on family and family law and children in care. We're very focused on the arts. We're very focused on manufacturing. We're focused on education. I will say, though, a mass nomination on Saturday by your party has never happened in the history of the province. So you can understand why people are looking around and saying, “What are you really doing?” Why would your nomination dates take precedence over creating a piece of legislation that would really help businesses?

But do you know what? Whenever the election day is, we're going to be ready. Bring it. We've got a good plan. People know who we are. I think people right now, though, in the province of Ontario are really wondering who you are, because if you are the party of supporting businesses and you bring forward a weak piece of legislation like this and call it helping business when it only buys them 32 days from being evicted, then you have failed abysmally. Good luck with that.

I think that concludes my comments on the time allocation motion that's before this House. I must say, I really enjoyed doing so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: This is a personally historic moment. This is the first time I've ever spoken to a time allocation motion. I know everybody is terribly excited about that.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go. I've just been voting against it. It happens to be one that's maybe not as controversial as the rest of the time allocation motions that I've witnessed in this Legislature.

What I do want to say about the bill is a rent freeze is a good thing. It's an important thing. There is a gap between now and December that the government should fill, that it needs to fill to protect those people who might have their rents raised between now and December, because as we know, it takes effect January 1. But a rent freeze is a good thing.

1630

One of the things, too, why probably it's not a good idea to be rushing this, in some ways—although we have to get it done—is the government should have looked at rent subsidies, simply because I think that would be a great way of supporting small landlords. We've all had calls from small landlords who say, “I've got this challenge. I don't have 10,000 units, I'm not a big company. I'm not bank-rolled. I don't have investments. I have a couple of homes that I rent, and now I have a challenge. I don't want to evict my tenant, but I'm not getting any money coming in, and I've got to pay a mortgage.” That's why a subsidy would be a good idea.

The rent freeze is important. We're going to support it. We're going to support this bill. Government should be considering a subsidy, especially as it impacts small landlords. We all know that. We all have friends who are small landlords.

I think the changes to the Municipal Act and the voters list are a good thing. I was just talking to a friend who got a voter card for a municipal election months ago for somebody who had lived in the house six years ago. The better we can make our voters lists—it will be good for democracy.

Lastly, the fines that are connected to this bill as well, in terms of social gathering—pretty hefty fines. I think we understand the importance of making sure that people follow those rules that we have in public health that are to protect each other. Again, I agree with those.

I think emphasis would have been better put on smaller and safer classes. I think emphasis would have been better put, a month ago, in terms of indicating to the population who were going to be the priority testing candidates, given that we have very limited lab capacity right now in Ontario, so we wouldn't have the kind of confusion and chaos there is around the return to school and testing and people waiting in line for weeks, days, hours to get a test.

I think penalizing people for not following the rules is what you have to do sometimes. And I think we would have been better served to actually prepare plans for things like testing and contact tracing, like a safe return to school and smaller and safer classes.

I want to thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to have the opportunity to be able to stand in this House and to debate the

time allocation motion, but also to rebut some of the statements that have been made by the government House leader, because we've heard him talk about New Democrats and not being able to keep a deal, yet we have facts of what those deals actually, truly looked like. So I'm pleased that the House leader is here, so that we can have this little chat about the leaking of information; we'll start with that one.

He claims that we leaked some information to the press on June 16, yet I have an article from Toronto Sun—their favourite newspaper—on June 8:

“Ford Freezes Commercial Evictions.

“The Doug Ford government is moving to temporarily ban commercial evictions of businesses that can't pay the rent...”

This is the same information that he's claiming that we leaked on June 16, and yet here we have this article from June 8 from the Sun.

And then we also have Global News, June 8—wow, same day. Again: “Ontario Introduces Legislation to Ban Some Commercial Evictions, Doug Ford Says.”

So this is the information that the government House leader has chosen to penalize New Democrats and the official opposition for in doing our job. I give the—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Hamilton Mountain. Please stop the clock. The government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Actually, the NDP released the contents of a bill that was private. The Premier was making an announcement, and the NDP released the contents of a private bill, which is the purview of all members to see at the same time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): That is not a point of order.

I will return now to the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Please restart the clock.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's really unfortunate that this House leader continues to put rules that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. Stop the clock.

I'm sorry to interrupt again. Member from Hamilton Mountain, I apologize.

There's some cross-chamber talk. We're almost through the debate at this stage, and it would be nice to conclude without the member-to-member conversations going back and forth. It makes it very difficult to hear whoever is speaking. I'd like that to stop, please.

I'd like to return to the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I think the things that I have to talk about are really important, because it rebuts what the government House leader has said derogatorily towards the official opposition.

There is another claim that he spoke about: that we broke another agreement regarding numbers of members to vote. We understand the cohorts. I think it's a great thing. I think we need to be in cohorts of some sort to ensure that this House can continue to move forward to do its business. But part of the agreement was that there was a reasonable time—that we notified the government of how many members we would have. We allowed them 27 hours' notice—27 hours seems pretty reasonable—to be able to have an extra six members to vote. That is more time than we were given notice of the time allocation bill that we're talking about today. So we gave them more notice that we were going to have more members in the House than what we have been given to speak on a motion that they put in front of us.

The government House leader, as wonderful an orator as he is—he's a fantastic speaker. He can get up there—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: “Aw, shucks,” he says. But he forgets to listen to the next line, which is—it would be really great if what he said truly reflected the work of the official opposition and how hard we work, as the official opposition, to ensure that we keep this government to account.

Hopefully, he'll be able to work better with the opposition going forward. Playing well in the sandbox will truly help the people of Ontario in making sure that we actually get good legislation.

With that, I'm going to go to Bill 204. I think it's really unfortunate—the time allocation motion as it sits, and cutting out the committee process. We know that our small businesses across this province are still struggling, and this will only give them a small bit of reprieve for another month. That's another month of no evictions—we're grateful—but it's not nearly enough, compared to the 800 hours and the 500 deputants who participated in the finance committee.

I was not a normal standing member on that committee, but I did join the committee several times throughout the process and did have the opportunity to hear from small businesses. As the member from Waterloo said, the two largest things that we heard about were the direct rent abatement as well as the business insurance and the struggles that businesses were facing.

In my riding of Hamilton Mountain, I heard from several businesses that continue to need support. We heard from Restorative Touch Physiotherapy, who couldn't get their landlord to give them a break. Freedom Studios the Creative Arts Centre own a dance studio, so they're still not able to have the numbers they had previously, and yet they're expected to pay the rent when their landlord would not participate—and this landlord owns over 60 properties. This is not a very small, around-the-corner landlord just trying to make it by; this is a huge corporation not participating in the program. The Premier said, “Please, landlords, do the right thing.” That was not nearly enough forcefulness. You see the restrictions they put on people who are not practising social distancing. They're getting \$10,000 fines. That's a pretty strong arm. That's a pretty

strong fist. Yet when it comes to our small businesses and the need for rent supports, the strong fist unfortunately just wasn't there; it was the good ol' boy talk. This landlord, who owns 60 properties, at the same time raised the maintenance fees. He raised the maintenance fees by 60%. These are the things that were allowed to happen throughout the pandemic.

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These are the measures that we could have been talking about and that could have been here in this Bill 204 to truly help our small business communities. Several businesses I heard from had to close their doors, and their lifelong work has been put to the wayside because there wasn't leadership when it came to a real rent program that truly would have helped the engine and the heartbeat of all of our communities: our small businesses.

I think it's really unfortunate that this bill was put forward in this format and that people will not have the opportunity to come to speak to this bill. We've heard from the member from Waterloo that the BIAs of Ontario are meeting right now to have this conversation, because they were planning on putting forward their ideas to be able to come to speak to Bill 204 and say, "This isn't what we told you. We told you we needed more than this." This is just pennies on what is truly needed.

When it comes to the residential rent: One of my constituents is a senior; her name is Lana. The day the announcement was made, she sent me a message on my Facebook Messenger and she said, "My rent comes up due in November for my increase of 2.2%. Am I going to be covered under this?" I had to go back and tell her, "No, I'm sorry. The government thought they should only do it at the beginning of the year." I think that a lot of rent increases happen in October, November, December, preparing for the next year, and that all those folks are just going to be left out of this equation, so their rent is going to increase. I felt really bad when I had to tell Lana, "No, I'm sorry. There's nothing I can do. I can talk to the government, but this government doesn't listen." This government is only going to do what they put forward, and why they would only start it in January is beyond me. It's something that should have been consistent throughout the year.

They're pushing this bill through quick. It's right now the end of September. They're planning on having no evictions by the beginning of October for small businesses. They could have done the same thing for residential tenancies, would you not agree? They could have done the same thing. They could have said no increases. But instead, they're helping their landlord buddies again. We should be helping the people of Ontario and the people who are paying rent, like seniors, like Lana, my constituent. She could have been happy that at least they thought about something about her.

We've definitely seen no supports for seniors through this pandemic. They're constantly messaging me, saying, "I've been left out of the equation." Once again, they're

left out of the equation, because this government didn't see fit to put forward a bill that truly reflected the needs of our small businesses, which they heard 800 hours of deputations on from our small business community; and they're certainly not listening to the thousands of tenants in our province who will be affected by the fact that their rent increase is going to go forward anyway.

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak. I hope that the government House leader will remember the true events that happened when it came to our agreements. I think it's important that we work together. I think it's important that we get good notice on when things are coming before the House to allow us the opportunity to make sure that we have fulsome debates here in the Legislature. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Rickford has moved government notice of motion number 90 relating to allocation of time on Bill 204, An Act to amend various Acts respecting municipal elections, to amend the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 and to provide for a temporary residential rent freeze and specified temporary protections for certain commercial tenants. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I have deferral slips.

"To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

"Pursuant to standing order 30(h), I request that the vote on government notice of motion 90 be deferred," and this one says, "be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, September 30, 2020."

Vote deferred.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 101(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Roberts assumes ballot item number 19, Mr. Kramp assumes ballot item number 22, Ms. Skelly assumes ballot item number 32 and Mr. Anand assumes ballot item number 34.

Orders of the day. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further business this afternoon, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1647.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioic Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

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Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

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Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (IND)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

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Wayne Gates, Randy Hillier
Andrea Khanjin, Jane McKenna
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

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Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
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Robin Martin, Norman Miller
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Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
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Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Lucille Collard, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
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Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
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Stephen Blais, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
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**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
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Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
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Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
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**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
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